JUNE 2020

AUSTRALIA

PLAYBOY

TACKLING *TABOO* WITH CARTOONIST ROBERT "BUCK" BROWN

WHEN MUSIC MEETS IDENTITY

GENRE DEFYING! PERFORMER KALI UCHIS REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

AT WARP SPEED

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ASHLEY C. FORD

A writer well acquainted with society's construction of body image, Ford met with I Weigh founder Jameela Jamil for this issue's Playboy Interview. "Jameela has certainly amplified the conversation about who gets to influence what we view as 'beautiful' or 'normal' bodies and how they directly benefit from the insecurities they encourage," says the Brooklyn-based writer. Named one of Forbes magazine's 30 Under 30 in Media in 2017, she's currently working on a memoir, Somebody's Daughter.

NADINE STROSSEN

In Words Matter, the New York Law School professor emerita and former ACLU president emphasizes the correlation between speech and progress. Strossen, who penned the 2018 book Hate: Why We Should Resist It With Free Speech, Not Censorship, argues, "The only effective way to encourage political correctness is through more speech. Civil discourse requires respectfully listening to ideas, as well as respectfully responding."

SASHA SAMSONOVA

The Ukrainian photographer, known for her portrait work, has lent Playboy her talents several times in the past year, shooting porn star turned whistle-blower Stormy Daniels, as well as makeup mogul Kylie Jenner and her then beau, Travis Scott. For The Empath, Samsonova turned her lens on Alicia Loraina Olivas, our tenacious June Playmate. "Alicia's confidence and fearlessness just poured out of her," says Samsonova. "She stood in ice-cold water and was like, 'I feel great!' She radiated so much energy — nothing inspires me more."

ALICIA GARZA

"Democracy is not a spectator sport. I hope the Symposium motivates readers to get involved," says the #BlackLivesMatter co-founder and guest editor of the latest Playboy Symposium. The seasoned community organizer recently founded Black Futures Lab and co-founded Supermajority to empower black communities and women in politics respectively. She also serves as the strategy and partnerships director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance and is a frequent contributor to Marie Claire.

GEORGE MCCALMAN

The vignettes bringing to life the voices in The Playboy Symposium are creations of this San Francisco–based artist. "The five figures are all fighters," says McCalman. "They believe humanity can be better than it is. I tried to capture that essence in my illustrations." His work can also be found in the San Francisco Chronicle columns Observed and The Usual, and in his debut collection,Illustrated Black History, out in August.

MATT LASLO

What makes Cory Gardner of Colorado a unique figure in national politics? playboy called on veteran Washington reporter Laslo to find out. In Senator Gardner, Radical Centrist, he discovers that despite sharing a ballot with Republicans, Gardner often holds positions that diverge from his party's. Of note: his support for cannabis legalization. "I was most surprised to learn Gardner — a champion of his state's legal cannabis industry — has never even tried weed," reports Laslo.

LONNIE MILLSAP

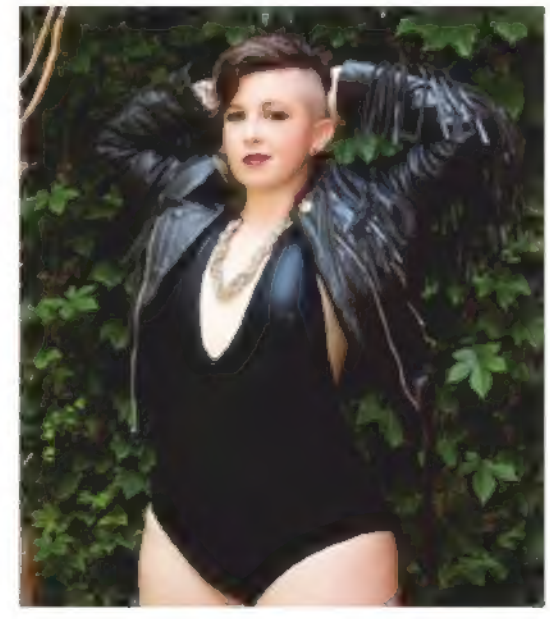
The Reuben Award–nominated cartoonist and New Yorker contributor has a significant professional relationship with our Speech Issue's theme. "As a cartoonist, freedom of speech is important because it gives you the ability to expand on any idea that comes to mind without having to answer to anybody," he says. Millsap's cartoons can be found in his annual art books, the latest of which is My Nib Is Cold!, and on page 61.

KILEY REID

"I was thrilled to make playboy a home for this short story, since it's one I've spent longer on than any other short piece," says the Iowa Writers' Workshop graduate and Truman Capote Fellow of her inaugural Playboy fiction piece, Your First Pet and the Street You Grew Up On. In 2019 the Philadelphiabased writer released her debut novel, Such a Fun Age, landing herself a spot on the New York Times best-sellers list.

TINA HORN

For SFSX: The Dirty Mind Guide 2 Talking Dirty, Horn collaborated with illustrator Alejandra Gutiérrez to bring her comic series to life for playboy. "Alejandra helped me dial down the serious nature of my sci-fi comics and accentuate the playful fizziness, sight gags and absurd horniness instead." In addition to working in comics, Horn is a nonfiction writer, Rolling Stone reporter, podcast producer and host (Why Are People Into That?!) and sex-work educator.



KRISTI BECK

Our senior manager of partner strategy is no stranger to Playboy magazine: Beck has been helping select Playmates for more than a year. "I'm passionate about female self-image and have worked to increase inclusivity in the Playboy brand. It's exciting to help a meaningful franchise evolve." For this issue, Beck expanded her role, recruiting I Weigh's Jameela Jamil, a fellow champion of inclusivity, to serve as guest editor.

RICHIE TALBOY

"I was hoping to rewrite history while capturing the iconic hypermasculinity of men's fragrance campaigns from the 1980s and 1990s," says the photographer of his shoot for The Future Is Dorian Electra. "Dorian was perfect for that, because they have a natural campiness that's ideal for creating imagery." Talboy portrays all his subjects—his clients include the high-fashion brand Prada as well as such high-profile celebrities as Kim Kardashian — with a distinct air of eccentricity.

OSMAN CAN YEREBAKAN

New York magazine and Artforum are just two of the publications Yerebakan contributes to in addition to playboy. For this issue, the writer traveled to Chicago to meet Nick Cave, subject of our artist feature Body & Soul. "Meeting Nick at Facility, where he lives and works, was a unique experience," says Yerebakan. "It gave me the opportunity to witness his everyday life. It's those intimate moments that illustrate Cave's prolific nature as a thinker, maker and human."

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TAYLER MERCIER
Photography by Nino Batista
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The Future Is Dorian Electra

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **RICHIE TALBOY**

"Basically, I'm Einstein," Dorian Electra quips. "Like, hello, I'm a genius."

The pop artist, who uses gender-neutral pronouns, is recounting the time they traced the mathematical steps in Albert Einstein's mass-energy equivalence formula, E=mc2, in front of fellow students at a Chicago liberal arts college. How fulfilling it was at the time to understand, at least tangentially, the thought processes of the famed physicist. The particulars of the calculations are now a bit foggy. "I swear to God, I don't have a good memory for details like that," Electra says. "But I don't think it was a waste of time. It gives me a boost. My ego is like, Yeah, one time I understood that."

In an industry that favors those who play by the rules, this pop shape-shifter proves the power of defiant individuality

BY **ALLIE VOLPE**

Electra often performs such mental gymnastics, attempting to dissect complexities in music, gender expression and personal history. The 27-year-old can analyze memes and philosophical theories, or gender stereotypes and choreography, while playing their own devil's advocate. They possess a mental stamina that never seems to wane. Frankly, being Dorian Electra is exhausting.

To be in their presence is anything but. Striking in an aquamarine blouse with a freshly dyed mullet to match, the artist brings a palpable vibrance to any room, both in this midtown Manhattan restaurant and, the following week, in the small East Williamsburg, Brooklyn venue where they'll perform for two sold-out nights. In rapid-fire staccato sentences, Electra speaks on the intersection of entertainment and education, the entrepreneurial nature of working at a strip club and how they avoid the guilt that can accompany the choice to embody traditional elements of both masculinity and femininity. That last pairing is what the gender-fluid artist (their gender identity continually changes: "I'm masculine and feminine, I'm both, I'm neither, I don't give a fuck") celebrates on *Flamboyant*, their debut album.

Over a tight 31 minutes, *Flamboyant* wastes no time setting scenes. The listener is catapulted into Electra's futuristic pop universe, where a vocalist can employ both falsetto and gritty chest belts, where hip-hop lives alongside baroque and heavy metal — often in the same song — and where a performer can wear suits and glitter, a penciled-on mustache and leather shorts. Without a road map, Electra acted on instinct and created music where there was none before. Now living in Los Angeles, they released *Flamboyant* independently this past summer. They also booked their own headlining tour last fall, had a run of dates opening for Charli XCX and handle most of their own press. Dorian Electra has always done things their own way.

"Dorian is so true to their self-expression, and that's really rare in pop," says queer artist and activist Mykki Blanco, who is featured alongside Electra on the Charli XCX track "Femmebot." "Their creative control is admirable, and they're really handling themselves well as far as controlling their narrative and creating original work for all of us to discover their world."

Electra — born Dorian Electra Fridkin Gomberg—was raised in a liberal bubble in Houston by parents Paul, who works in real estate and performs in a cover band, and Paula, a musician, entrepreneur and jewelry maker. The couple bestowed a gender-neutral name on their only child, who wore it with pride. Electra didn't play with dolls but wasn't into sports either. Instead, they experimented with performance, dressing up in drag and idolizing Austin Powers. "Part of the humor comes from the fact that he thinks he's really sexy, but he's gross," Electra says. "That masculine ideal definitely shaped my personal sexual orientation or idea of gender. It's way more on the Austin Powers side of the spectrum in terms of outlandish, ridiculous, kind of borderline grotesque."

After Paul and Paula divorced when Electra was five, Paula dated women. Paul remarried, and Electra went to live with him and his new wife. Although Electra's parents were open-minded — "We always had gay family friends, and someone in our family is trans; these things were just a normal part of our family life" — their conservative stepmother disapproved. She criticized Electra's decision to eschew church, conduct a research project on HIV/AIDS and more.

In fourth grade, Electra tried theater. Hardly athletic, not quite skilled at drawing and stifled academically by attention deficit disorder, Electra found in musical theater a space in which they were praised for their talent. But telling other

For me, everything is a passing phase. Everything is always changing."

people's stories has its limits: The look, feel, tone and narrative arc are already determined. At 14, Electra discovered they could craft their own stories. Along with a friend, they created a fan video for the English band the Horrors, filmed on the friend's MacBook webcam. Electra then began to use digital storytelling for school, writing songs and making videos for book reports and, eventually, research projects at Shimer College in Chicago. Without realizing it, they were carving a niche as an academic performance artist.

"It started as the perfect synthesis of all my interests. I love all this academic stuff," Electra says. "It's also a good mental exercise for me to break down these complex things in a way that can be accessible to many people in more casual, layperson terms."

It was Electra's video projects that caught the attention of the creative team at Refinery29. The women's website commissioned the artist to make a sex education video in 2015, granting them the freedom to create however they pleased. The result was a bubble-gum song and a video that sees Electra dressed in a clitoris costume, accompanied by backup dancers in vulva attire. The video was a hit — it won a Webby Award in 2017 — so Refinery29 sent them off to make more. Electra returned with campy visual essays on the history of vibrators, drag, high heels and the marginalization of women, people of color and the trans and immigrant communities. In an age when memes proliferate at lightning speed on TikTok and editorial spaces have largely pivoted to video, Electra's mastery of the medium proved to be vital to their career. It still is: The videos for "Flamboyant," "Daddy Like," "Man to Man" and "Career Boy" use storytelling to upend gender stereotypes.

While the video projects allowed Electra to explore the queer and feminist movements, they also led the artist to explore their own gender identity. During the 2016 production of a video on the history of drag, Electra befriended queer and trans people in Chicago, some of whom used *they/them* pronouns. Electra never identified with the term *nonbinary*, but *gender fluid*, with the way it paints gender as constantly morphing, felt right: "When I finally switched to *they/them*, it was really hard for me to ask people who had known me from before to use them," Electra says. "And then everyone questions your authenticity, like 'You're just doing this for marketing purposes. You just feel like you want to be special.' It happens to trans people too. They're questioned: 'Is this a passing phase?' But for me, everything is a passing phase. Everything is always evolving and changing."

Remaining in Chicago after college, Electra discovered how to use their body — for performance, for pleasure — as a server and topless dancer at a strip club. After answering a Craigslist ad for what they assumed was a catering gig, they were ushered onto a club floor wearing two layers of thongs, a skimpy fishnet dress and high heels, and carrying a handful of alcohol-filled test tubes. The tips from $5 boob shots weren't enough to pay the bills, so they opted for higher-paying private topless dances. One shift paid out more than Electra had ever earned before. "I never felt that confident in my body, because I was not this femininеideal type," Electra says. "But these people are literally paying money to see me and my body and feel me grinding on them."

It could have been an opportunity to rebel against traditional femininity, to shelve the attributes that appealed to the club's clientele, but Electra took to the role. Dancing for strangers felt sexy; it was a turn-on.

"I've actually embraced those gendered ideas," they say. "I spent so many years in college and after trying to socialize myself into those things that now I've accepted them, and I'm learning to be okay with enjoying them too. There's nothing wrong with me wanting to feel really feminine or submissive, or the opposite — because I also felt a lot of guilt about that once I started getting into feminism and then discovered my own gender identity. I'm like, Wait, is this at odds with my gender identity?"

Electra took their own feminine parts, as well as the camp and garishness of male idols David Bowie and Austin Powers, to create a new kind of pop star — one who cheekily insists on being called "Mister" and subverts the accepted meaning of flamboyance into an on-the-nose personal treatise. "It's this idea of whimsical self-awareness," they say. While many artists (Lady Gaga, Björk) use grandeur as a means of expression, Electra uses humor and rebellion as a guide to usher in what Blanco describes as "a new generation of queer talent who will be judged not on the politics of their identity but hopefully on the quality and awesomeness of their music and creative merits."

This is the Dorian Electra who lives on *Flamboyant,* unbounded by genre or gender. In the early months of 2019, the artist and six producers crafted the majority of the album. Some of that time was spent in a Las Vegas Airbnb where Electra would bounce from room to room, going to each collaborator whenever the session's energy dulled. Full of outrageously glossy club music that uses gender as performance, *Flamboyant* challenges the confines of conventional pop. On stage the songs come to life through choreography, Electra's chameleonic vocal stylings and smoldering glances to the audience, and two bearded backup dancers, all three performers dressed in intergalactic-gladiator bondage gear.

Whether blending harpsichord and dubstep beats — and somehow managing to make the result sound cohesive — or taping their breasts in photo shoots, Electra wants to challenge audiences. "I know my voice is really annoying and off-putting," they say. "But I'd rather risk alienating people because of that than not excite them because my voice was forgettable."

You would be remiss to forget Electra. In fact, it might be impossible. You can hear their mind racing in real time, witness them stumbling onto a theoretical discovery they hadn't before considered. You can see their past and future painted in the details of their words.

Electra has an afternoon of unscheduled nothingness following our interview, though I suspect they don't need a plan to know where they're going, in the moment or in general. "The thesis of what I believe is everything's way more complex than people want to make it," they say. "Things change and evolve, and that's why fluidity in all areas seems to make the most sense to me as my life philosophy."

There's nothing concrete in the world of Dorian Electra. There never was, and if we're lucky, there never will be. ■

ANGEL *Allison*

Model **@MSANGELALLISON**

Photography by **LESHAUN | @COURTULOOKIN2**
Hair by **KELLY MARIE | @00KELLYMARIE00**
MUA **CRYSTAL BROWN | @BROWSBYBROWNIE**
Event **@GLAMBYALICIAXOSHOOTCATIONS**

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
I'm always thrilled to shoot with the #1 men's magazine. It's such an honor.

Tell us something surprising about you?
I fly airplanes in my spare time.

Describe yourself in one sentence.
No filter, outgoing, crazy, adventurist

What are some of your hobbies?
Shooting guns, riding motorcycles, playing golf, tennis, surfing, snowboarding, cooking

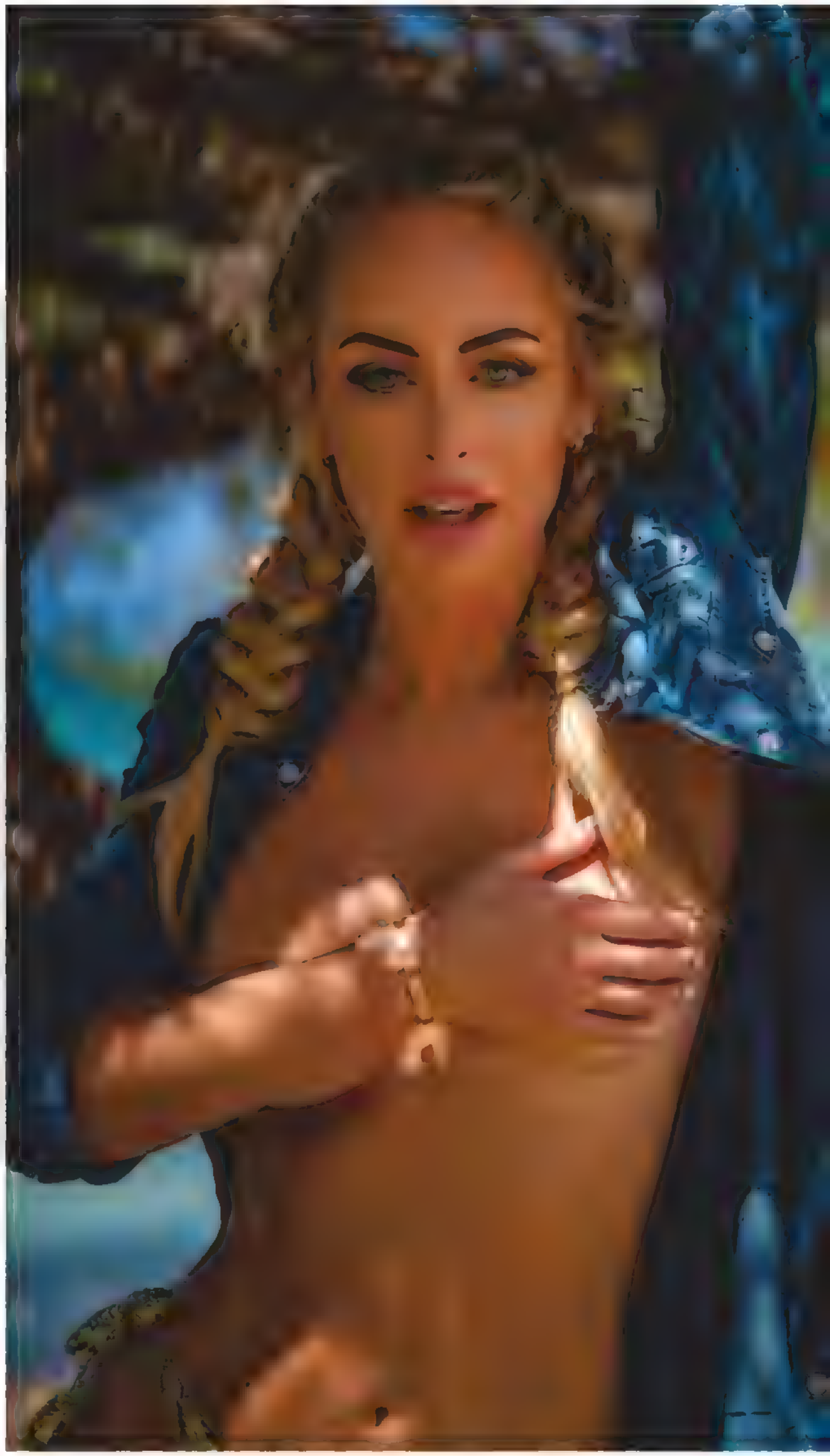
What Is your biggest turn on?
Generous, kind people

What turns you off the most?
Bad hygiene & rude people

Describe to us your perfect date.
I love everything from a home cooked meal to an evening away.

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
Getting images back from photographers.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?
Live every day likes it your last. And Karma is real...remember that!



back *to* kali

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DANA TRIPPE**

What happens when an artist tosses the pop-star rule book in favor of fierce authenticity? Kali Uchis is ready to find out

BY **EVE BARLOW**

Kali Uchis does not like to be the center of attention. Our original lunchtime table wasn't in an open part of the restaurant, but she still preferred to move to a spot in the corner. Now nestled between two walls, she's protected and able to keep out of the way. She excuses herself for being shy with a nymph-like laugh.

At the age of 25, Uchis is often unsure of herself, but her brutal determination keeps her moving forward. She's hard to miss, dressed for the roller rink in blue denim and a vintage longsleeve T-shirt. Her lashes are extended, her lips are plumped and her nails form miniature Perspex daggers. Her hair is a wig.

"I just throw it on and then I'm done with hair!" she says.

The restaurant is in Studio City, which — like Uchis — is a bit of an outlier in Los Angeles. It's not *Valley* Valley; it's not Hollywood either. But if you know your chūtoro from your ōtoro, you know that Sushi Katsu-Ya is worth the trek. Uchis knows. She's a pescatarian, and she orders a baked crab hand roll that she manages to wrap her mouth around without ruining a smidgen of lip gloss. She talks fast and loose. She drinks hot tea. She spills a lot of it too.

When she put out her jazz-inflected neo-R&B album *Isolation* in 2018, Uchis received near-universal praise for her loner anthems. She collaborated with Tyler, the Creator; Damon Albarn; Steve Lacy; even Bootsy Collins. In interviews, however, journalists failed to get a read on her. An article in *The Fader* asked, who is the real kali uchis? Today, in the first week of 2020 — a year in which she'll release a new album (in the spring) and star in a movie *(Blast Beat)* that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival — it's becoming clearer who she is. She's someone who's finding her roots, someone who's taking the reins of her creativity, someone who's more accountable for her actions. Someone who means business.

"I been working," she says of the Christmas break. "It was hard for me when the new year started, because we went into a weekend. Do I not e-mail people that day?" She smiles warmly and shrugs. Last year was rough; Uchis was eager to wipe the slate clean.

"A lot of fucked-up shit happened in 2019 technically two weeks ago, but I'm gonna leave it back there."

Personal or work?

"Um, a lot of personal stuff." She goes quiet. Over miso soup and popcorn shrimp it becomes obvious that some wounds are too fresh to be exposed.

"In 2020 I'm trying to move from a place of love," she says. "Be myself. I worked out the things I needed to at the end of 2019. I could bring in the new year knowing what I know."

• • •

The past year wasn't all bad. Uchis bought a house in a neighborhood a little deeper into the Valley.

"Growing up, I never had a safe space to be myself," she says. "My main dream was to be able to not ask anyone for shit — to take care of myself."

Kali Uchis grew up Karly-Marina Loaiza between Virginia and Colombia. She has three brothers and an older sister, and when they were little their house in Virginia was a safe space for immigrant cousins en route to their own American dreams. She shared her room with female relatives who passed through.

It wasn't a happy childhood. "The way my family communicates with each other can be really aggressive," she says. She learned how to defend herself. "People in school and my family were always making smart remarks about me. You learn how to have tough skin. You learn how to be combative."

In school, Uchis was a "super band nerd," playing piano and saxophone. She was quiet and escaped public speaking by ditching school. She wrote stories. She made clothes. To this day she wants to be a movie director; she's always writing plots. "Anything I could do in the creative process made me feel like I could escape my situation," she says. "From the moment I got my first job I was really good at saving my money."

At 15, Uchis began working odd jobs. She worked at a grocery store. She waited at a Mexican restaurant. Her last retail job was as a cashier. "All my friends were going out partying. I was paying bills."

At the low point of a long-strained relationship with her parents, Uchis, then 17, was cast out of the house and had to live in a parking lot in her Subaru. Soon thereafter she made her first mixtape, *Drunken Babble*, on GarageBand, debuting the results on a free download site in 2012. The internet was impressed — so

impressed that the DIY swirl of samples, soul and synth-laden rap caught the attention of Diplo and Kaytranada, who helped her produce her first studio EP, 2015's *Por Vida*.

A North American tour led to a record deal with Virgin EMI, which led to *Isolation* in 2018, which led to a Grammy nomination. But her nascent stardom wasn't enough to heal her wounds.

"I was self-destructive in my career," she admits. "I'm opinionated. I fight with people online." Even with her increased visibility, Uchis took everything personally, as she had in her youth. "Being a public figure is being constantly up for display. It can really fuck with your mental health." (She contends that record labels should pay for their artists' therapy.) She has come to an important conclusion: "Criticism and flattery are the same thing. As long as people are talking about you, that's all that matters."

In 2017, Uchis came under fire for comments she made on Twitter, lashing out at critics who had accused her of manipulating her image to capitalize on her brownness. (The controversy stemmed from tweets that compared her differing looks on the cover of *Por Vida* and a promotional photo for the album.) She maintains she never intended to hurt anyone but admits she attacked people on bad days because it was her only vehicle for venting.

After the clash, she took a lengthy Twitter break. "It fucked me up," she says. She was too sensitive to be online. "Sometimes I just don't want to be fucking looked at."

Uchis went to therapy for the first time after her summer tour. She says she's never had a consistent support group: "I literally didn't have anyone to talk to. I'd never objected to a therapist. It's just that they're very expensive. It came to a point where I was like, 'You know what? I want my mental health to improve.' "

Mental health issues run in her family: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression. "A lot of family members have killed themselves, killed other people, been abusers, been abused, all types of ways," she says. "When you have that embedded in your DNA it can take a while to learn how to cope with it on a daily basis."

There is one guaranteed source of catharsis: performing on stage. Last year, touring with Jorja Smith, Uchis covered Radiohead's "Creep." It's a hypersexual rendition — more sensual than art rock. She's well-versed in Radiohead's catalogue, and she chose to cover the song because it's about being unloved. "It's a song for people who feel like they don't fit in — that's the story of my life."

She listened to "Creep" a lot in high school, around the time her niece, only seven months old, suddenly and tragically died. When Uchis talks about death she seems to disassociate. Her face goes blank. "I've lost a lot of people," she says. "I cried a few times when singing 'Creep.' "

Again she shrugs over the popcorn shrimp. "I'm not a big crier."

• • •

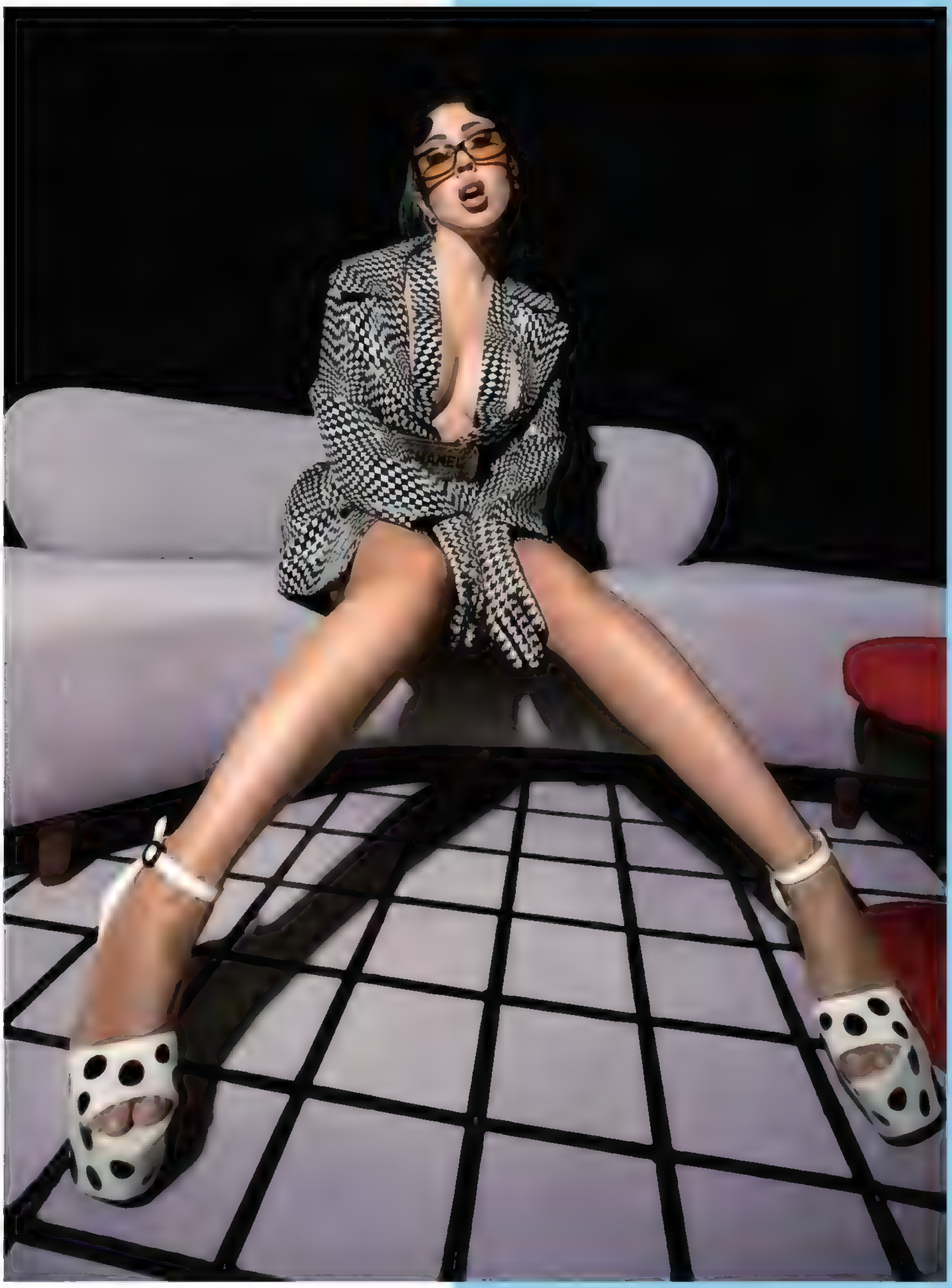
Once she settled into her new house last summer, Uchis decamped to Miami to work with producer Tainy, whose recent clients include reggaetón megastars Bad Bunny and J Balvin.

"I always wanted my second album to be predominantly in Spanish," she says. But she's not looking to replicate the successes of Balvin, Rosalía or others setting the Billboard charts ablaze with Spanish-language hits. "I love them, but our experiences are different," she says.

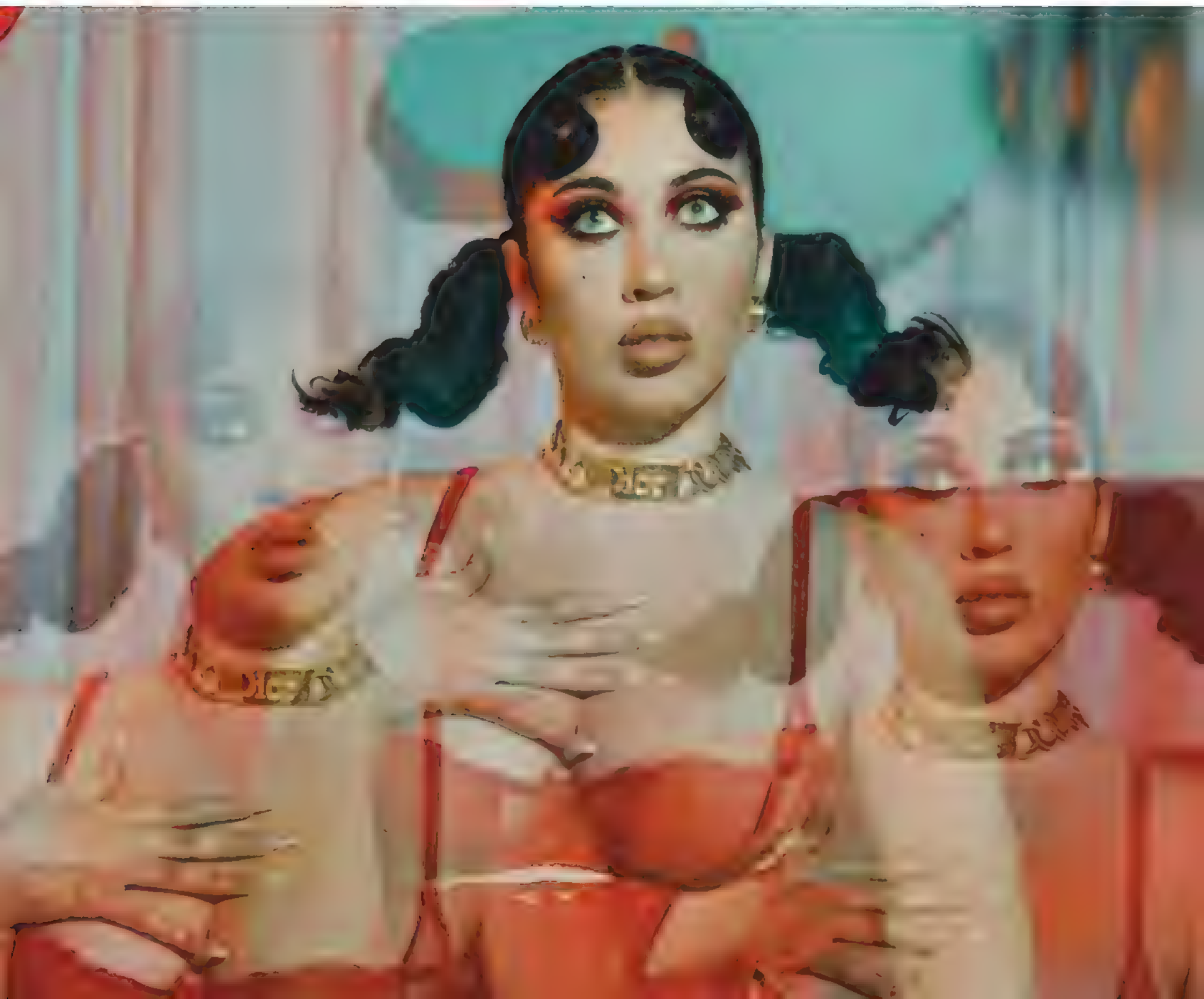
Her experience is rooted in a childhood spent boomeranging between two continents. Uchis went to school in Colombia for three years and made sure to visit there annually after relocating to the United States. (Her parents still live in Colombia.) She attended T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia, which is nearly 80 percent minority. "We had a big Latino community, though not Colombian," she says.

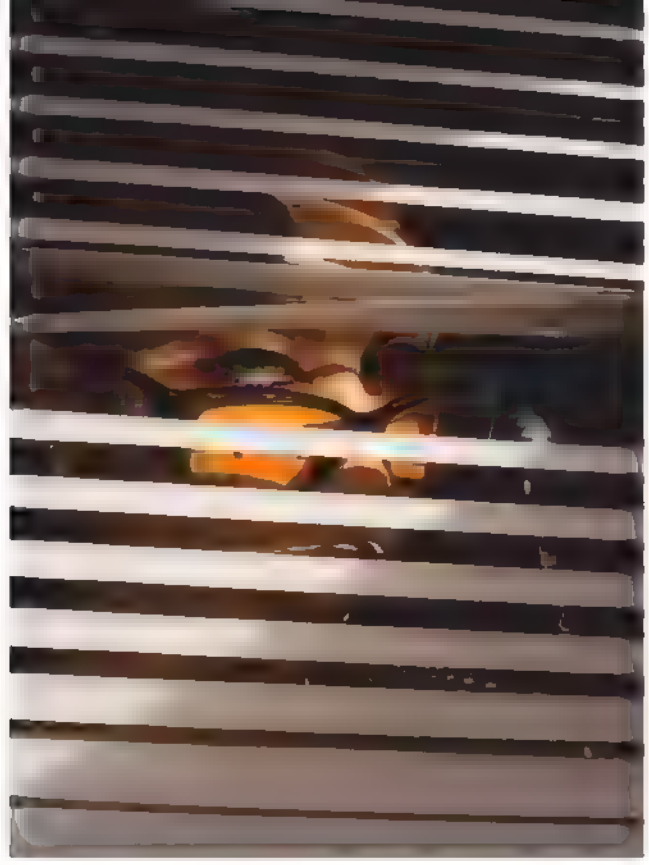
She knew other Latino kids in Virginia who'd never visited their origin country and didn't speak Spanish. "They would be bullied if they were fresh off the boat. That's what they'd call you — an FOB," she says. "It's beautiful that people are now embracing those coming straight from our countries. That's part of what I wanted to do —capture that pride. I live in the U.S., but that doesn't mean my culture has to be washed away."

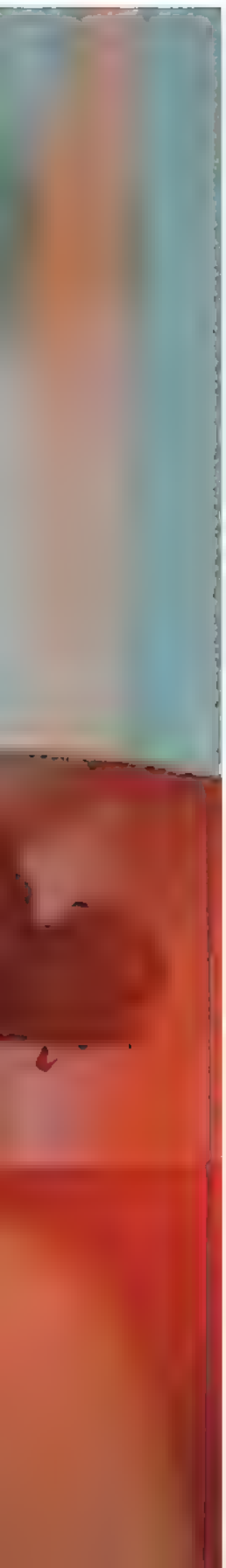
This new, as-yet-unnamed album is in Spanglish and was cranked out in one "super inspired" week. Her rise didn't



"When I'm **dead** I want to be remembered in a **positive way,** but while I'm here I don't mind being **misunderstood.**"







create second-album paralysis; if anything, Uchis feels liberated by success.

"I'm going back to how I used to write when I started," she says. "People might think I feel more pressure, but it's the opposite. Your first album is how you get your foot on your world. Now that's over I can do whatever I want."

Her first single, "Solita," released late last year, chimes with that sentiment. *"Solita, solita / Bailando aquí sola / Es mejor que con el diablo"* translates as "Alone, alone, dancing here alone is better than dancing with the devil."

• • •

Uchis offers few other details about the album but does play me five unfinished tracks after our meeting. Even if they're incomplete and untitled, they prove she's doing what she wants regardless of the success of Isolation and the stratospheric rise of Spanish-language music on the charts. Uchis's music is still in its own scintillating corner — a little moodier, a little slower, a little hotter. The tracks are hypnotic; listening to them is like being drenched in billows of intoxicating smoke. In one of them she sings, "I got what you need, I know what you like."

She explains that the record jumps between genres and moods: Some songs are vulnerable, some sexy, some sad, some empowered. "It takes me by surprise when people say, 'I like your confidence,' " she says. "I never felt like a confident person."

Clearly she projects confidence into her songs, manifesting the self-worth she seeks. I wonder aloud what fuels that ability when she's having a bad day.

She thinks. Uchis can't remember exactly when it happened, but when she was younger she became wise to other people's toxicity. "People can infect and train you in ways that deteriorate your self-esteem. They make you feel like you're worthless," she says. "Everything in my life is what I accept. The things that I've been through, I don't let them define me. That's an important part of life if you want to move forward and be better than you were yesterday."

Ingrained sexism is something she's had to overcome too. "There's a pedestal you should put yourself on in order to tell the world, 'I only accept this type of treatment from my friends, lovers, family,' " she says. "If you don't want to interact with me like I'm a queen, then you don't have to be in my life." This mentality has caused her to lose a lot of friends — and family. "It's tough. I'm a Cancer. I want to be a family-oriented person, but they keep doing stuff to piss me off!" She giggles and breathes a sigh of relief. "I'm so much happier than I used to be."

Her heroes are misunderstood figures, particularly female ones: Eartha Kitt, Amy Winehouse, Erykah Badu. Growing up she had few women in her life to admire (her elder sister was in foster care), so she looked to *Resident Evil* and *Kill Bill* for icons ("Women who were kicking ass!"). Consider that list of heroines: If any of them had paid too much attention to how they were perceived, it would have detracted from their power too.

"In a perfect world I would want people to see me the way I see myself," she says. "I can be hard on myself, but I know I'm a good person. I don't need people to see that about me. When I'm dead I want to be remembered in a positive way, but while I'm here I don't mind being misunderstood."

She continues to ponder her legacy, as though life could end at any moment. "I would like to be remembered for being…." She flutters her lashes. "Iconic? And imperfect."

Most of the time she wants to hide in the corner. "If someone told me this would be my future, I'd think they were talking about a whole different person. You have to have good people skills, and I don't."

I disagree.

"I'm having a good day today," she says, smiling. "But if you had asked the wrong question.… I've had interviews where the person would have walked away thinking, This girl's such a bitch. If other people had been through half of what I've been through, they would have quit."

Before she goes, I ask which part of her new home is her favorite. The enthusiastic reply: the recording studio.

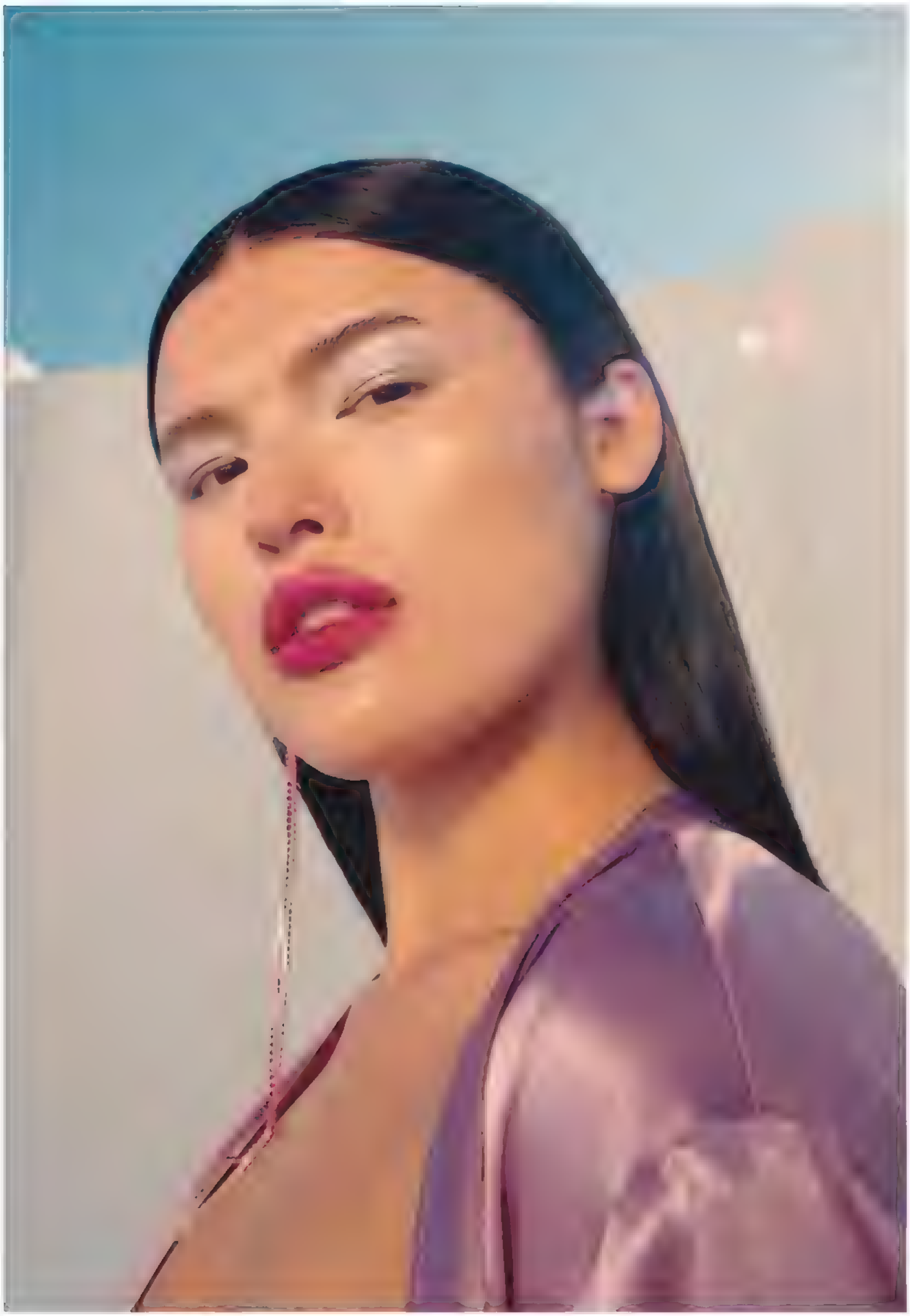
"I got a lot of pillows and plushy toys," she says. "My studio is like a little girl's room — all pink. When I go to make music I want it to feel like I'm back home in my dream room that I never got to have."

She grabs her Louis Vuitton and dabs on some more lip gloss before offering an embrace.

"I'm trying to rebuild my childhood."

THE EMPATH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
SASHA SAMSONOVA



There are billions of people on this Earth but only one **Alicia Loraina Olivas**—and our June Playmate is on a mission to celebrate the unique beauty of every last one of us

"Alicia, you're amazing."

I was at a shoot the other day and had to stop, look in the mirror and remind myself of this fact. For most of my life I've been on a journey to find peace with who I am. I'm in an amazing place now, but it hasn't been easy.

Growing up, I got picked on a lot for being overweight. I would come home from school and cry because I wanted to be skinny so I could fit in with everyone else. In middle school I swung between wearing shirt girdles and eating my younger sister's birthday cake out of the trash. Eventually I thought, *Okay, girlfriend, something's got to change; you can't keep living your life like this*. The pressure of wanting to fit in, to be liked and wanted, was just too much.

When I changed schools halfway through middle school, I began to let my personality shine through. I made some friends and gradually realized my weight didn't matter to anyone. When I turned 16 I started making healthier lifestyle decisions — but not because I wanted to fit in or lose weight. Being unhealthy made me depressed, and changing my lifestyle helped me find confidence and happiness. It finally clicked: It was never about getting other people to like me; it was always about me loving myself.

I now believe I was meant to go through those struggles so I could share my story and help others. I have a deep sense of empathy ingrained in me. I feel like a sponge a lot of the time: always picking up on people's energy and learning from them.

That's part of what drew me to pursue a degree in social anthropology (which, simply put, is the study of human societies and their development over time). People have always intrigued me—the way they feel, think, react to one another. The estimated world population is about 7.7 billion people, and not one single individual is the same as another. Each of our voices is important. We should spend more time listening and less time judging each other based on our exteriors.

Of course I'm very passionate about modeling. I've had a lot of exciting opportunities over the past few years, but being a Playmate is by far the highlight of my career thus far. I'm the only person in the world who gets the honor of being the June 2020 Playmate, and that's special. This is the first time I've ever posed nude, but I find that doing anything for the first time is exciting, and I like to live life with no regrets!

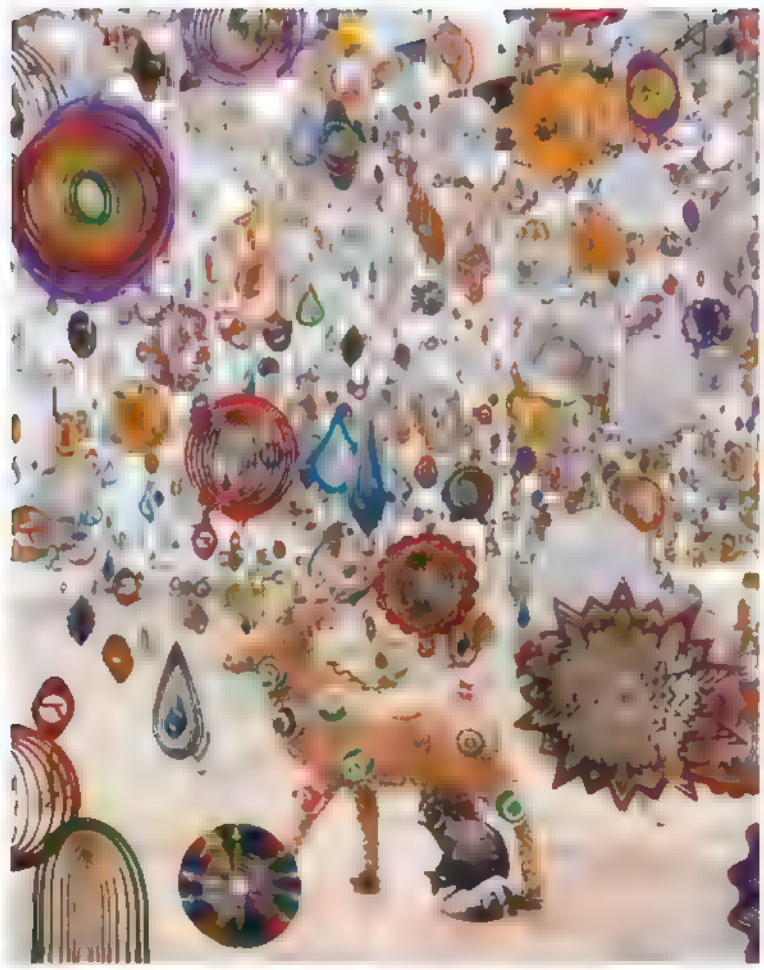
Going into the shoot I felt some natural insecurities creep in, and I couldn't help wondering how my body would be perceived by the world. I had to look in the mirror and remind myself how beautiful I am just the way I am — model, student and activist; a woman of Mexican, Spanish, Irish, French and Native American descent; a force to be reckoned with. During the shoot all the love I've kindled within myself came shining through.

I wouldn't be where I am today, standing proud as the June 2020 Playmate, if I hadn't learned the power of self-love. You can't love other people and put love back into the world until you love yourself.

body & soul

With a full slate of 2020 projects, multimedia artist **Nick Cave** reaffirms his dedication to fostering community, speaking truth to power and celebrating our wondrous, vulnerable bodies

BY **OSMAN CAN YEREBAKAN**



Opening page, above and opposite: The mixed media centerpiece of Cave's solo exhibit Until, opening at the Momentary in July, includes mi l ons of plastic pony beads, 16,000 wind spinners, 24 chandeliers, 17 castiron lawn jockeys, 13 gi ded pigs, more than 10 m les of crystals and one ceramic crocodi e

On a foggy Chicago morning I find myself sweating atop an elliptical in a hotel gym, preparing my questions for Nick Cave. I push and pull the machine's handles as fast as works from Cave's vast repertoire march through my mind. His impossibly intricate *Soundsuit* sculptures dance in full ecstasy, their fringes twirling; the dance party he organized around a mammoth rotating streamer curtain for *The Let Go*, an immersive exhibition that debuted at New York's Park Avenue Armory, reappears in epic radiance.

My visit to the gym before our meeting stems from an urge to project deftness — intellectually and physically — in front of a man whose art has allured, provoked and moved the public for nearly three decades.

At first sight, Cave, 61, radiates controlled dynamism through his sculpted physique and magnetic eye contact. Standing beside him in a room populated with items he has gathered to create new *Soundsuits* — the first in years, he says — I notice a pile of colorful sweaters on an ironing board. Two male mannequins are stationed by a cassette player Cave still uses to switch between tunes according to his mood. He wears an all-black ensemble of sports jersey and skirt, finished with chunky high-top sneakers. We proceed to wander through Facility, a multipurpose studio, gallery and private space he shares with his personal and professional partner, graphic designer Bob Faust, and their dog, Bam Bam.

Cave's biggest upcoming project is a restaging of his solo exhibition *Until* at the Momentary, a satellite of Crystal Bridges Museum in Bentonville, Arkansas, in July. (This follows its debut at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts in the fall of 2016 and adaptations in Sydney and Glasgow.) The show, whose title is an allusion to the legal principle of "innocent until proven guilty," is one of the artist's most direct responses to the country's current ills — in particular its gun policies and racial profiling by law enforcement. Ingrained in Cave's flamboyant visual lexicon is piercing commentary on the urgency of taking a stand, as well as the irreversibility of harm.

He recalls his initial reaction when he heard about Freddie Gray's death in 2015. "I am an artist with civic responsibility, so how do I use the voice I am fortunate to have?" he remembers thinking. Furious, he wondered if racism exists in heaven, a rumination that served as catalyst for Until's installation of acrylic pieces blended with domestic icons of Americana and consumption.

Until consists of a tent stitched out of shoelaces next to acrylic and glass ornaments suspended from the ceiling — a colorful rain of pony beads, dream catchers and drop-shaped decorative pieces the artist collected from shops around the country. Immersing the audience in a kaleidoscopic forest, the arrangement is studded with such alarming details as bullets embedded in wind spinners. From above hangs a mammoth crystal cloud made of 14 layers of materials, including crocheted blankets on the cloud's bottom, hiding beneath its surface like a sea of colors and serving as a reminder of safety. On the outside, lawn jockeys poke their heads among an array of gramophones, porcelain birds and metal lamps.

"The vulnerability is always exposed within the work, one way or the other," says Cave, who spent more than four weeks hand-embellishing the cloud's outer surface for its initial hang at MASS MoCA. Ladders allow the audience to face, up close, details both horrific and mundane. *Hy-Dyve*, an immersive video projection Cave created as part of *Until*, fills a room with images of water rushing beneath viewers' feet while avian and human eyes stare from above the flow. The artist's signature use of movement and gesture through the body echoes in the room-enveloping projection — a hallucinatory commentary on the slave trade and contemporary policing, on American racism then and now.

Bound by *Until*'s sheer physicality, the clashing motifs raise a question: What is this focus on the body that runs so viscerally through Cave's work? The installations darkly beckon, and the *Soundsuits* noisily dance — but where are they leading us?

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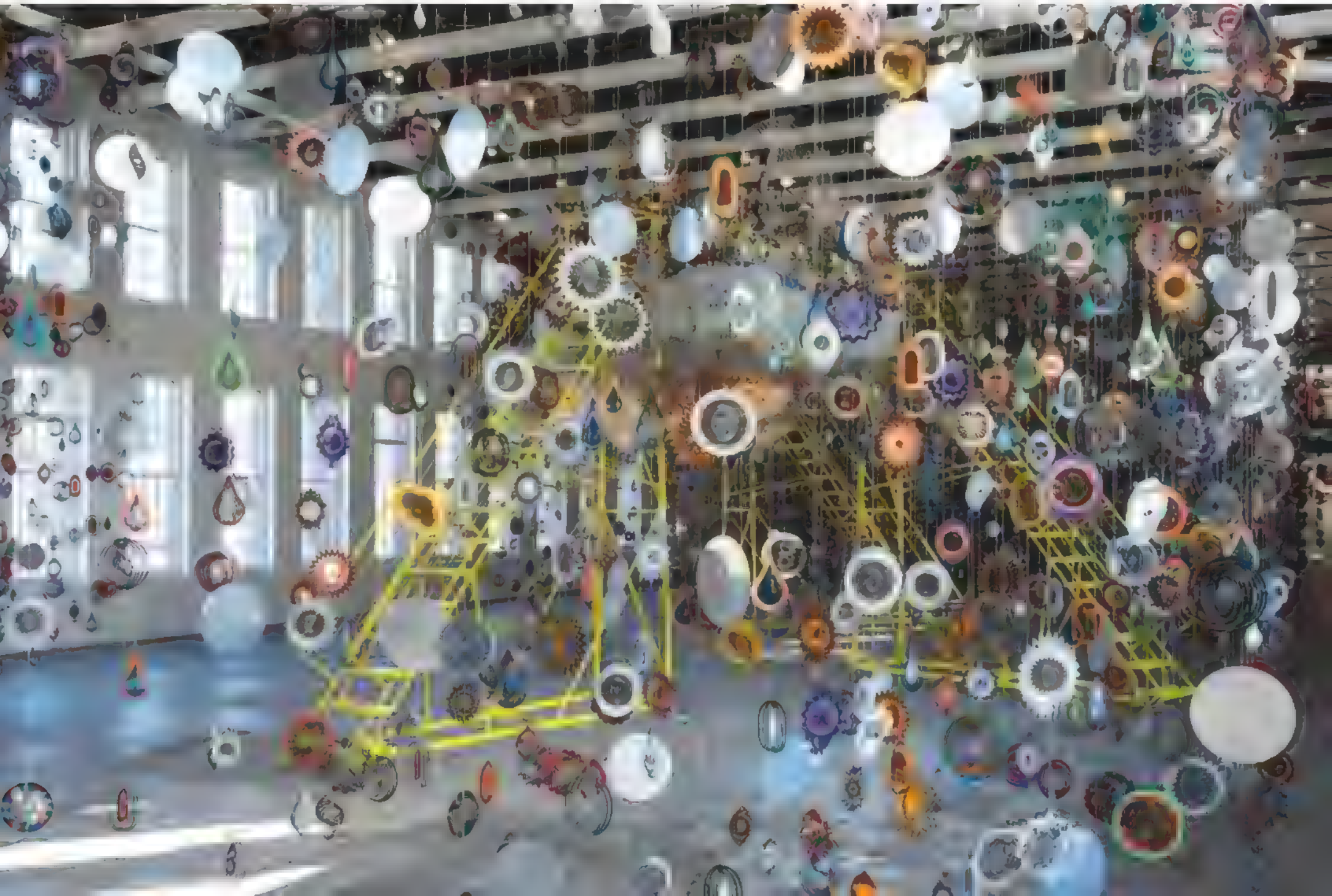
Sea Sick, a piece from his 2014 Made by Whites for Whites exhibition that pairs a racist tchotchke with an architectural composition of seascape paintings, now sits in Cave's living room, where he also displays paintings by contemporary American artists Barkley L. Hendricks and Titus Kaphar. One floor down, six assistants weave beads and sew threads, adjacent to a gallery where Cave and Faust rotate works by established artists such as Jeffrey Gibson and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, as well as works by emerging names and thrift-store finds that spark their interest.

"Nick is a collector at his core, both through sourcing materials for his works and also in his incredibly impressive art collection," says Jack Shainman, who has been showing Cave at his eponymous New York gallery for nearly 15 years. "His dedication to supporting young and emerging artists spans Nick's creative practice, from burgeoning artists, musicians and dancers in his performance pieces to the founding mission behind Facility."

Among his peers, Cave is unique in combining art and other disciplines on a grand scale, weaving together fashion, dance, theater, music and performance while remaining true to his vision as a sculptor. (He even works with text: Made by Whites for Whites included a take-home brochure featuring essays by Henry Louis Gates Jr., David Breslin and more — a rare example of the artist feeling his visual language wasn't enough to express the meaning of his work.)

"I'm creating works that open themselves up to dance or theater, which can function from one extreme to the other, with space always allowing room for it to happen," he explains. His passion for expression through movement entered his system early and never left. After working until the early hours of the day, a college-age Cave would dance away his frustrations at gay clubs close to his studio at the Kansas City Art Institute, where he received his bachelor of fine arts degree in 1982. He would make himself a new piece of clothing each night. "Cruising wasn't really my thing; dancing was how I worked through everything," he says of his early forays into gay life in the late 1970s.

One of six brothers, Cave was born in Fulton, Missouri in an environment that quickly made him aware of the forces he



Cave made his first Soundsuit from twigs in 1992 in response to the L.A. police beating of Rodney King. Each weighs between 30 and 50 pounds and takes four to six months to construct. The Soundsuits on these pages were created in (from left) 2017, 2015, 2015 and 2016.

would spend much of his life fighting. "Racism and homophobia come in all shapes and forms, but it's about muscling up," he says.

Cave remembers his mother's reaction when he dyed his hair blue in high school. Decades later, color and dance are still big parts of his identity — so much so that in April he's bringing *The Let Go* to Chicago's Navy Pier for a weeklong condensed program with local performers and musicians, free to the public.

His plans for this year also include an exhibition, curated by Faust, in Facility's front windows. It will feature mainly local artists and designers and focus on "voting and voice," two months before the November election. "We have to be positive and keep doing what we can do!" he says. With a laugh, he admits

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK

It's all **fucking drag,** honey."

he's disappointed with 2020, which so far does not resemble the space saga he imagined when he was a teenager.

But Cave could change that.

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Another plan for this year is a "next-level *Soundsuit*"— cast in bronze, 18 feet high and displayed as an outdoor monument.

In 1992 he made his first suit for what would become an army of genderless and nationless aliens invading museums and streets across the globe. The otherworldly sculptures, some of which can be activated by dancers, have become the signature works of Cave's oeuvre, combining all key elements of his practice. They're masterfully beaded and woven textile sculptures, representing the inclusive and celebratory roots of his vision through color, texture and dance. Sounds emanate from the materials, whether they're whirling buttons or the twigs that adorned his very first creation. They give the dancers agency and let them intervene in the space with unapologetic flamboyance. The performers' voiceless anonymity is supplemented by the materials' kinetic sounds, which Cave uses as metaphors for seeing beyond the surface and understanding the essence that constitutes our identities.

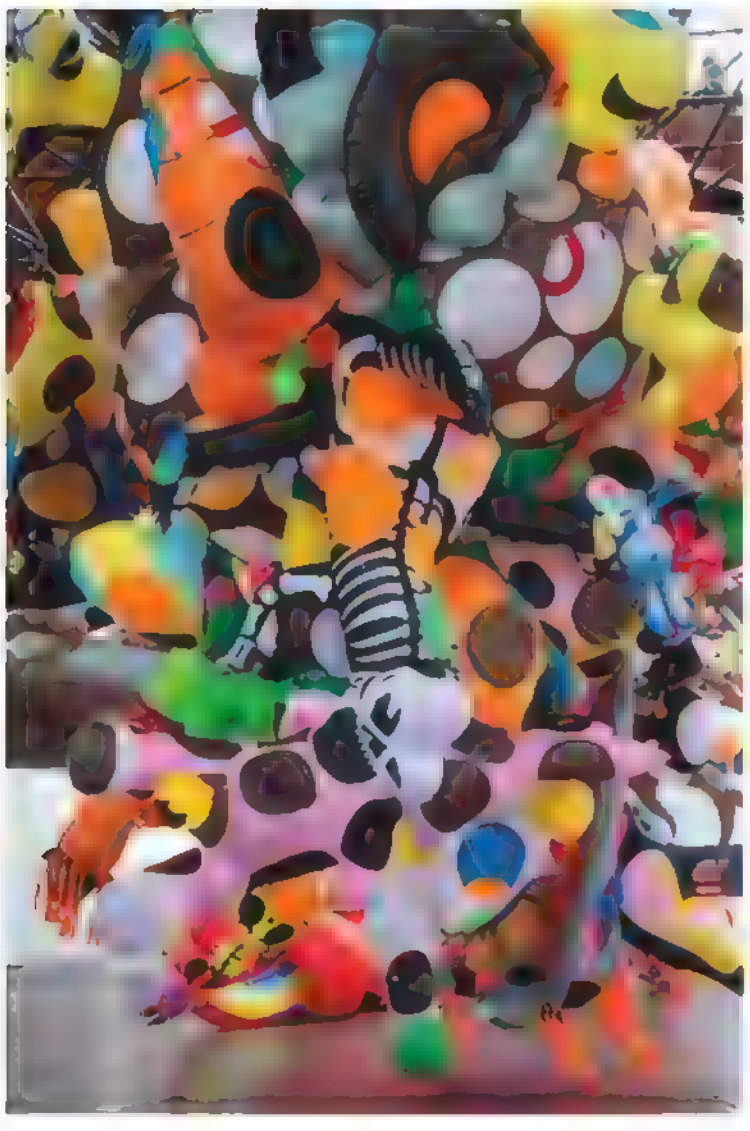
When I note the correlation between the *Soundsuits* and drag, he's quick to respond: "It's all fucking drag, honey." Cave sees a clear parallel between performance and our day-to-day rituals of self- expression. "We're all in drag. Every day, we put it on depending on what's coming," he says. He smiles with the wisdom of an artist who remembers wearing a Fiorucci skirt to school and bravely passing a group of teenagers on the street. "I just gained this inner power, keeping it moving and being fabulous."

Today, the same mischievous glee is evident: "I could be in blue jeans from a thrift store, a fabulous little T-shirt and some running sneakers, but I may have on a leather jockstrap!"

• • •

Cave is one of the most community-driven, collaborative artists working today, sharing his platform with everyone from legendary choreographer Bill T. Jones to a local musician in search of a broader audience. He's happy to get out of his own way and allow other experiences to fold into his practice.

Here Hear, a major celebration of Cave's work at suburban Detroit's Cranbrook Art Museum in 2015, manifested his commitment to speech and giving voice to the silent. Returning



Top and above: Previously unpublished scenes from 2018's The Let Go traveling to Chicago in April. **Left:** Previously unpublished image of Augment, part inflatable sculpture, part community experience inspired by the question 'What brings you joy?' (On view in Boston through April)

to the Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he received his master of fine arts degree in 1989, Cave invited hundreds of locals, including LGBTQ youths and students from various art programs, to participate. Over seven months, they collaborated in performances, photo shoots and dance workshops.

"The ingenuity of Nick's practice extends to his strategies for how the artwork operates in the world," says Laura Mott, the museum's senior curator of contemporary art and design. "The resonance of this project has been astounding, from dinner tables to foundation board meetings. It's often cited as the primary example of an artist 'getting it right' in Detroit."

Cave describes his collaborative instinct in typically vivid terms: "You could drop me out of a plane anywhere in the world, and I can make an amazing project. Everybody wants to be acknowledged for what they can bring to the table. How do you give them that permission to stand in the light?"

It's hard to imagine, but at one point Cave himself was not standing in the light. Back in the 1990s he was a creative nomad, launching shows, packing up and moving on to the next venue with no further plans. He was a structured free spirit who trained his voice by remaining steady and consistent. But around 1996 he woke up one day and said, "Now or never." He left an amazing relationship behind and let everything go.

"My life changed overnight," he says. He was "stepping up to fear, to the unknown." During his emerging years, his work had been about following his nose. Once he'd stepped up, his mission became clear: "to remain on the outside, always ready to jump into the center — not the outer edge but into the center." When he jumps back out again, "what I've delivered in the center has to take care of itself."

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These days Cave sits in silence for two hours every night; he says it brings him closer to the truth. Mondays and Thursdays are reserved for his 24 graduate students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is a professor of fashion, body and garment.

Sea Sick, from the exhib tion Made by Whites for Whites, 2014, mixed media including oil pa ntings, ceramic container, cast hands and plastic ship

"Fashion is a form of advertisement that I can make a political statement with," he says, sharing his idea to produce a 10-look collection to follow each of his solo exhibitions, which he would debut during fashion weeks.

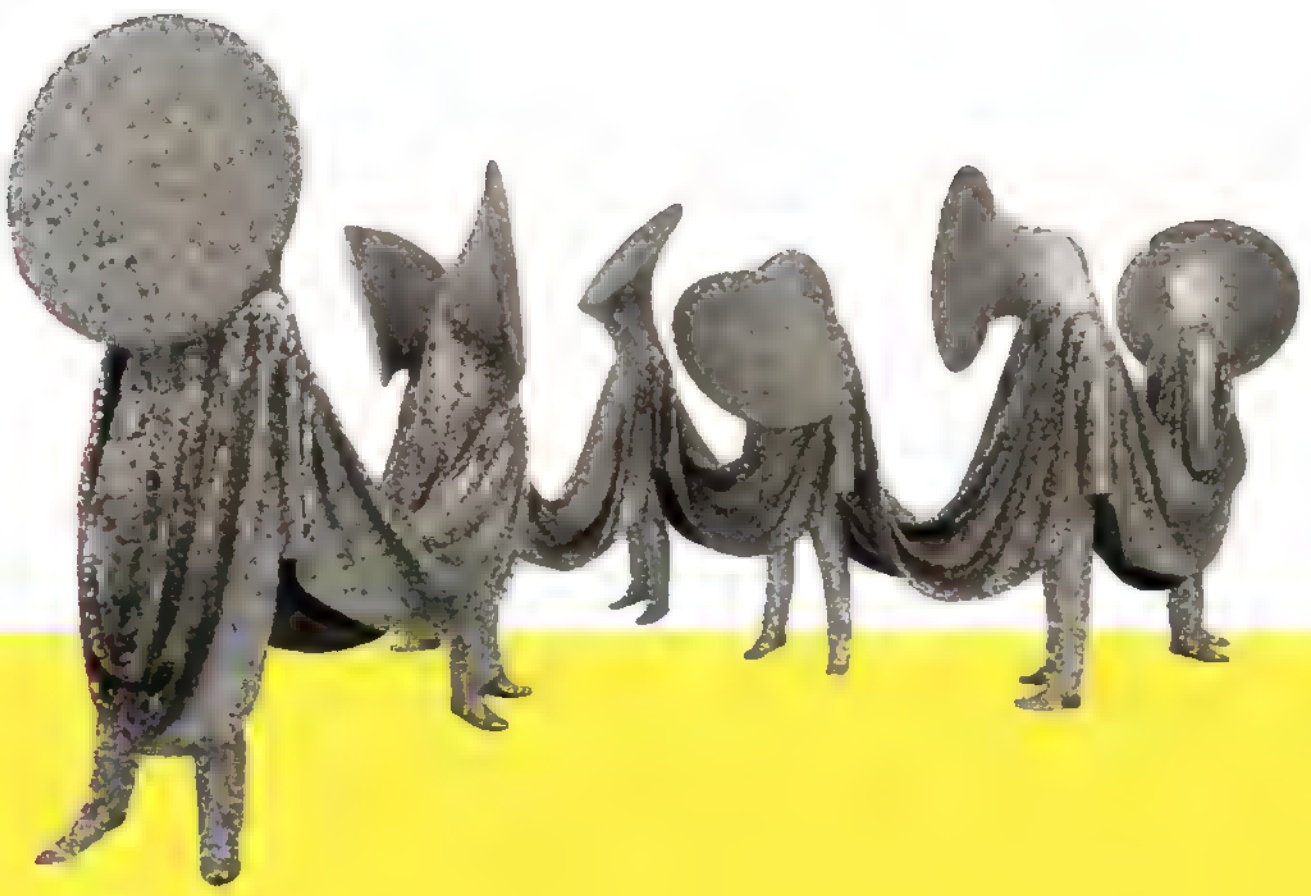
Fashion and garment are manifest in a given Nick Cave piece, but what about what lies beneath them? The body means everything to Cave: It's a tool to experience pain and glory, the good and the bad. It's both a target — as *Until* sharply declares — and an instrument for seduction and sexual desire, most apparent in his wild, balletic *Soundsuits*. But it's more than that.

"The body is the mechanism that grounds us to humanity," he says. He finds drive sexy; motivation turns him on. He sees himself as a messenger delivering deeds to ambassadors, who ensure their urgency is maintained. Once again, he speaks through the body, its power to connect.

"I am able to use art as a vehicle for change," he says, "but this is bigger than me."

I am an artist with civic **responsibility,** so how do I use the voice I am **fortunate** to have?"

Above: Rescue, 2013, mixed media including ceramic birds, metal flowers, ceramic mastiff, v ntage settee, and light fixture **Right:** Speak Louder, 2011, mixed media including black mother-of-pearl buttons, embro dery floss, upholstery, meta armature and mannequ ns **Opposite:** Soundsuit, 2010



Tayler

MERCIER

Model @TAYLERELAINE_
Photography by NINO BATISTA | @NINOBATISTA

This is a very excit ing time for me. It's an honour and a privilege to work with Playboy. I'm a Texas girl at heart and it is my love for travel that makes this international shoot very special to me and close to my heart.

PLAYMATE

Describe yourself in three words...
Independent, sensual, romantic.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Yes. Very excited. It's an amazing opportunity.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?
I have always loved fashion and glamour and this was my way of expressing that interest.

What are some of your hobbies?
Travelling, spending time with my friends and family and my dogs, decorating, shopping, singing in the car, going to the gym.

Describe your perfect day off.
That's easy. Staying in bed all day in my pyjamas.

Name three things on your bucket list.
For me, this would be three places I have to visit. Italy, France and Greece.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?
I am definitely a country girl at heart. I grew up in a small town so my heart will always be in the country but day to day I live a city girl's life.

What inspires you?
Original deep thought is very inspirational to me, self-made success, and love for family and friends inspires me to be a better version of myself.

Tell us something surprising about you.
I am a huge animal lover. Dogs and horses have my heart.

Describe to us your perfect date.
Dinner by candlelight and a full body massage with soft music in the background.

Turn-ons
Someone who makes me laugh is my biggest turn on. Honesty is a must. Someone who challenges me intellectually.

Turn-offs
Arrogance: If someone goes out of their way to appear important that is not a good sign for me. Chauvinist: Anyone not looking for an equal partner is a no go for me. Liars: They must be honest with integrity.

Be sure to follow Tayler's adventures on Instagram ***@taylerelaine_*** *for all her latest news and story updates!*

naked *defiance*

An artwork created from playboy's pages challenges the idea that nudes exist merely for others' pleasure

BY **SARAH BOXER**

Photomontages are subversive by nature. They're counterfactuals — pictures cut up and rearranged to show things as they are not, things as they *might be*, pictures that pose an anxious question beloved by fantasists, moralists and revolutionaries: *What if?* Objects and bodies are turned on their heads, sometimes figuratively, sometimes literally. Think of the German dadaist Hannah Höch's 1929 photomontage *Fremde Schönheit* (Strange Beauty). Onto a photograph of a reclining nude white female body, Höch planted an oversized image of a carved stone head, along with a pair of eyeglasses and eyes that are, in turn, too large for the head. The nude, familiar to Western eyes, thus has become a jarring hybrid. It's clearly subversive, but what exactly is subverted?

Keep this question in mind as we look at a photomontage with an unusual playboy history: the artwork displayed above. Created by Martha Rosler in the early 1970s, the piece is a subtle and comical work. Rosler, known for her socially biting photography, video and performance pieces, never titled this work, but it now goes by the laughably long name *Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain: Hot House, or Harem (After Ingres)*. Snipped from the pages of playboy, these wholesome-looking young women lounge about together wearing nothing, forming a landscape of "alluring mounds of flesh," as Rosler has said. The women in this topography are white, mostly, and topless, all, coyly obscuring their privates in various ways, often while smiling and making eye contact.

These nudes were not always on the same page. They began their public lives separately, representatives in playboy magazines of

a certain American ideal of beauty from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s—Connie Kreski, Kathy MacDonald, DeDe Lind and dozens of other models. Some years after publication, when the images had mostly finished out their lives in bathrooms, bedrooms and basements, they found themselves bound up with string and tossed into the garbage. And there they unwittingly began a new existence as part of the feminist revolution.

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In the trash heaps of her New York City apartment building and the town dumps of southern California, Rosler found and rescued these photos from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. What she really dug about these sexpots was what she saw as their "just past" beauty, as she explains in an e-mail. She loved that they occupied "the twilight realm" between being desired and being rejected. By the time she discovered and recovered them, the nudes had been dumped for younger, more contemporary beauties as playboy's primary aesthetic moved from "corn-fed" gals modestly revealing themselves to raunchier, more exposed poses. (The first Centerfold to go full frontal was in January 1972.)

Liberating the semi-nudes from their pages, Rosler rearranged them en masse on a new page for a new life. Like other Rosler photomontages of the early 1970s that juxtapose mismatched images to make a social point (in one work, for instance, a woman calmly vacuums her curtains while outside her window a scene from the Vietnam war unfolds), *Hot House* was clearly subversive. But to get back to our opening question, what does it subvert?

As I see it, in Rosler's hands the *Hot House* panorama of bodies evokes not so much the cozy seductions of playboy itself but something vaguely threatening. As Richard Meyer, an art history professor at Stanford University, notes in "Feminist Art Re-Covered" (his chapter in 2019's *A Companion to Feminist Art*), the playboy figures in Rosler's collage "overproduce female submission to the point where it becomes something like its opposite — a wave of naked defiance" — and also, possibly a picture of female pleasure. That seems to be roughly how Rosler sees this work today too.

"Almost all the women in my photomontage are lying down,

in postures of allure or surrender," Rosler says. But as part of a harem, she notes, "they arguably constitute a woman's domain, a 'heterotopia' carved out at least temporarily from the domination of the master." They're rebellious servants, free and unafraid. Seen this way, the photomontage begins to look like a horizontal riff on Pablo Picasso's famously challenging early cubist painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, which features five female nudes aggressively standing and staring down the viewer. Even the colors are similar.

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Throughout the 1970s Rosler kept *Hot House* in her home, only bringing it out as a slide for an occasional lecture. Two decades later, though, her collages began to enter the art market. As Meyer notes, copies of her pieces were no longer "roughand- tumble paste-ups or agitprop flyers" but rather "editioned photographs (which is to say, commodities)." It was at this point that Rosler's playboy photocollage acquired its long name.

Then in 2007 the world was hit upside the head with WACK!, a groundbreaking exhibition of 119 feminist artists. Organized by curator Cornelia Butler, the show opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and included plenty of provocative works, including *Hot House* and 30 other Rosler photomontages.

But the big news — and, for some, the big outrage — was the exhibition catalogue's cover design, which features a large detail of Rosler's collage and the words *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* splayed in white, all-caps letters across the mounds of flesh. The meaning of the *Hot House* nudes began to change anew

Some artists were angry, some puzzled, some tickled. Some viewers worried that the cover seemed to sanction a particular kind of feminism: the branch that has become derogatorily known as "do-me" feminism. Others thought the cover suggested, inaccurately, that the WACK! exhibition focused only on women and their bodies, women as sexual objects and women as sexual beings. Still others complained about the cover's "peep show" aspect. *New York Times* critic Holland Cotter called it "just another sex-sells pitch." Never mind that Rosler's work has always been considered revolutionary, sharply critical of the commodification of women's bodies. Those same bodies — the nudes that had been made for playboy — had once again become hot commodities.

The reaction didn't surprise Rosler. In fact, she remembers warning the catalogue's designer that the cover would trigger a response. But Butler and the WACK! team stood firm behind their decision to feature the playboy nudes. (By the way, the Hugh M. Hefner Foundation happened to be one of several big

donors to the exhibit.) Rosler believes the curatorial team's insistence on using her PLAYBOY work was largely based on their conviction that a work of art "made up of a very large number of women, mostly looking at us without shame, is inherently ambiguous. It's 'playful!' and perhaps pleasurable — for women." In other words, there's safety in ambiguity. Well, maybe.

After WACK!'s L.A. opening, several of the exhibition artists went out for dinner, including Mary Beth Edelson, perhaps best known for her 1972 collage *Some Living American Women Artists*, which was included in WACK! In that collage, all the bodies at the table in Da Vinci's *Last Supper* are topped with the heads of female artists (for instance, Georgia O'Keeffe's head appears on Jesus's body).

"We were all euphoric over the exhibition," said Edelson, recalling the night of the WACK! opening in a Clocktower interview with Butler. "Of course the big discussion was the cover.... I mean, some of the women were very polarized about it, just thought it was awful." Others, including Edelson herself, thought it was pretty gutsy. As the evening wore on, someone suggested that Edelson do to the *WACK!* cover what she'd done to *The Last Supper*: paste the faces of feminist artists onto the bodies.

"We just all shrieked with joy," Edelson said.

Then Edelson went to work, gluing cutouts of dozens of feminist artists' faces atop the models' nude bodies. A prominent position was given to Rosler, whose head is planted on the body of September 1967 Playmate Angela Dorian, right above the catalogue's title.

• • •

What kind of subversion is Edelson's radical redo? Is it an act of outrage, sisterhood or something else? Butler, WACK!'s curator, tells me by e-mail that she views Edelson's take as "a love letter to the show and everyone involved." And, she adds, it's also very funny. But Meyer sees it as a more ambivalent gesture, suggesting that although Edelson's collage assembles "a community of feminist artists — and the humor and pleasure they shared," it also signals those artists' anger about "being erased from the cover in favor of eroticized bodies posed for male pleasure." Unlike Rosler's *Hot House*, he notes, Edelson used a "purposeful crudeness" in her cut-and-paste technique, which points to what he calls "the rather different crudeness of the [real] WACK! cover — namely the way in which it presses naked women's bodies into the service of marketing feminist art."

Rosler, for her part, says she finds Edelson's "appropriation of my appropriation...clever...and humorous." This further subversion of the PLAYBOY images, she says, "converts the unnamed young body models of the PLAYBOY endeavor into risky/frisky images of well-known older women artists replacing their anonymity with Personalities."

But wait a second — didn't these models already have personalities? Aren't they still personalities? Is it possible that Edelson, in obscuring their faces, has actually robbed the original models of something they'd managed to hold on to until that point — their very identities?

And now, with this article, the narrative of the nudes evolves once again: They have returned to playboy, from whence they began. Is this yet another radical gesture, and if so, what is its meaning? Well, it just isn't clear. And that's how it has always been. Even now, Rosler says she isn't sure exactly what she had in mind some 48 years ago when she assembled her PLAYBOY nudes. The cutting and positioning of the figures she recalls clearly, but, she says, "I simply have no idea when I thought of doing this photomontage, how long it took me to do it, or why."

So we're back where we started, with the same uneasy question: Why this subversion? What do we gain that wasn't there before in the PLAYBOY nudes? There's no obvious answer, but what jumps out is that after nearly 50 years, after all the cutting and pasting, effacement and rearrangement, one thing remains in its startling quiddity: the bodies themselves, just as fresh, or rather just as "just past" fresh, as they ever were. ■

Patrick
Stewart

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ELIZABETH WEINBERG**

With *Picard*, the *Star Trek* universe has rediscovered one of its brightest stars. The actor and activist (and knight) talks Hollywood inclusivity, cannabis reform, pit bull rescue and whether he'll ever say "Engage!" off camera

BY **STACEY WILSON HUNT**

Q1: *The internet arrived in earnest between Star Trek: The Next Generation and Star Trek: Picard. How have technology and social media changed your life and work?*

STEWART: I remember when iPhones first came out someone said, "Do you realize these are just like *Star Trek?" [laughs]* We used to have these things that we would talk on — or the other guys did. I just scratch the surface of what my phone can do; voice activation makes me uneasy. But we have access to CGI and special effects that are far more powerful than what we used to have. I hear about social media's hostile side, which I've encountered only once or twice. You can't comment about anything without attracting angry attention. That makes me uncomfortable.

Q2: *Isa Briones, an actress of Asian descent, and other nonwhite performers are central to Picard's narrative. Does a series like this, one not rooted in reality, still have a responsibility to reflect the real world?*

STEWART: I'm moved when I recollect [*Next Generation* co-star] Whoopi Goldberg telling me what it meant to her seeing the character Uhura on TV; what she said to me was, "One of us made it," which is partly ironic and a little cynical but nevertheless profound. Thankfully we are energetically acknowledging that there has always been a problem, and we're doing something about it. Five of our 10 episodes were directed by women, and I continually find myself in scenes in which female cast members outnumber the male.

Q3: *What is it about the mythology of Star Trek, the original series of which started in 1966 and lasted only three seasons, that has allowed it to endure?*

STEWART: In part it returns me to Whoopi's comment. We live in a complicated world in which the need for care and concern for other members of society is much more potent than it ever was before. My wife and I went to Italy earlier this year: Florence, Bologna and Ravenna. I'd never reflected much on these cities, so when I saw they were ancient towns — not just a church here, an old building there — and still vibrant parts of Italian society, I was astonished. The connection between past and present was so strong. *Star Trek* offers this too. And the connection to Whoopi's comment is that it will get better. Though right now it doesn't feel like that.

Q4: *Novelist Michael Chabon is a writer on Picard. How is it different working with someone more used to the solitary act of book writing?*

STEWART: He is so smart, open and interested. His enthusiasm for the actor's technique and processes is genuine. Because I'm an executive producer, I had access to the writers' room. It was a privilege to hear them bouncing ideas around in a way that actors and directors don't. One writer will take up an idea but change it into something else, and then another writer will change it again. I find it frustrating when they say, "No, that's not going to work," and move on to something else. [laughs]

Q5: *Picard is action-packed. What is it like doing stunts now that you're older?*

STEWART: Hell. I have a type of vertigo that hit me three years ago. I'm dizzy pretty much all the time, except when I'm sleeping or driving. Doctors say there's a disconnect between the signals my eyes and inner ear are sending to my brain. If I stand up quickly I might fall over, so I have to be careful on set. There's a scene in which Isa Briones and I run up a flight of stairs. They said, "We have a stunt double for you." I said, "Actually, let me give it a shot." I ran up the stairs and felt fine! I think when I'm acting, the dizziness goes away. Thank God.

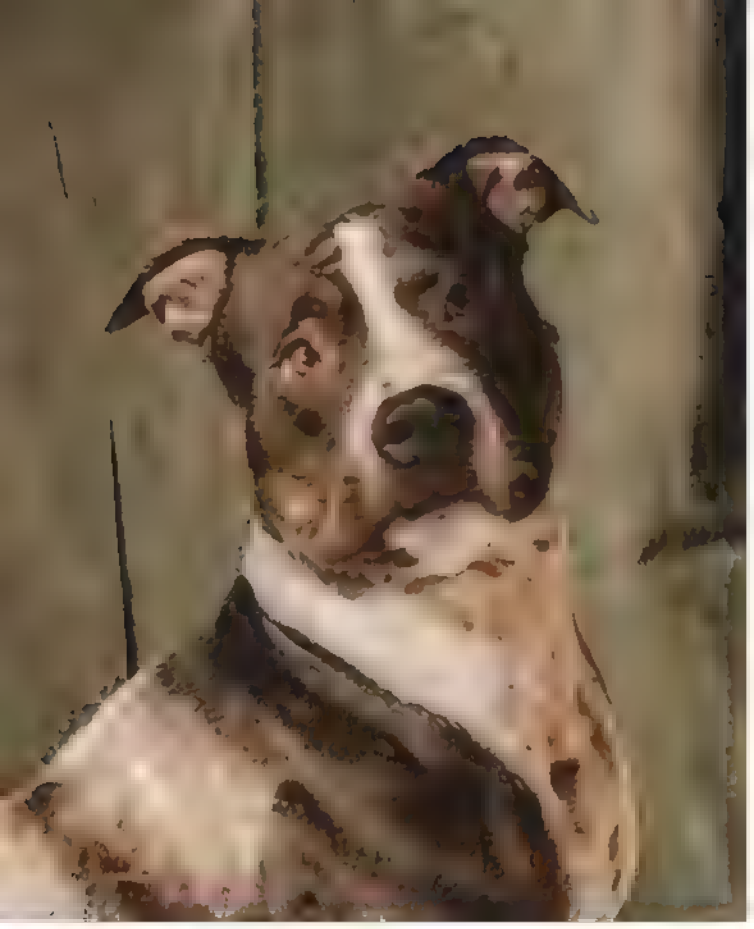
Q6: *A slew of your Next Generation pals, including Brent Spiner and Jonathan Frakes, appear on Picard. Are you all still close?*

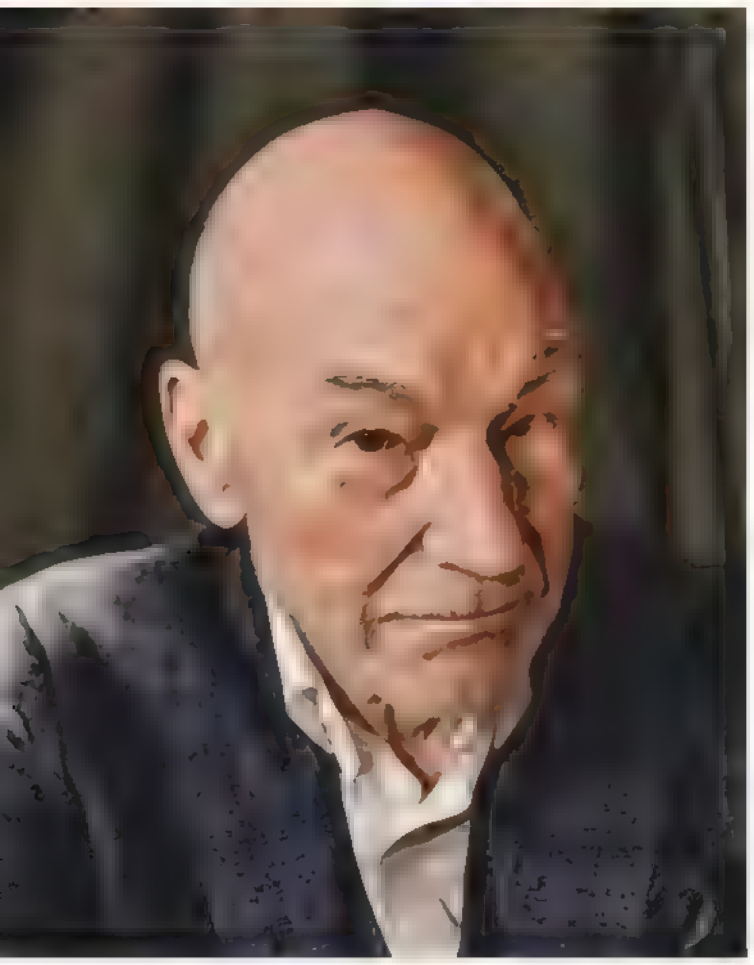
STEWART: Yes. We see each other all the time, though not Whoopi as often as I'd like. They're beautiful people. Casts are thrown together, and the nature of acting means you're exposing yourself, which is a great bonding agent. I recently reached out to someone I'd worked with in 1967 at the Royal Shakespeare Company. I'd heard he was living in Beverly Hills, and with my team's help, I made contact. His name is Sir Ben Kingsley. [laughs] Over the years we would wave and say hi — but as I reminded Ben, he actually slept on a mattress on my bedroom floor for several nights.

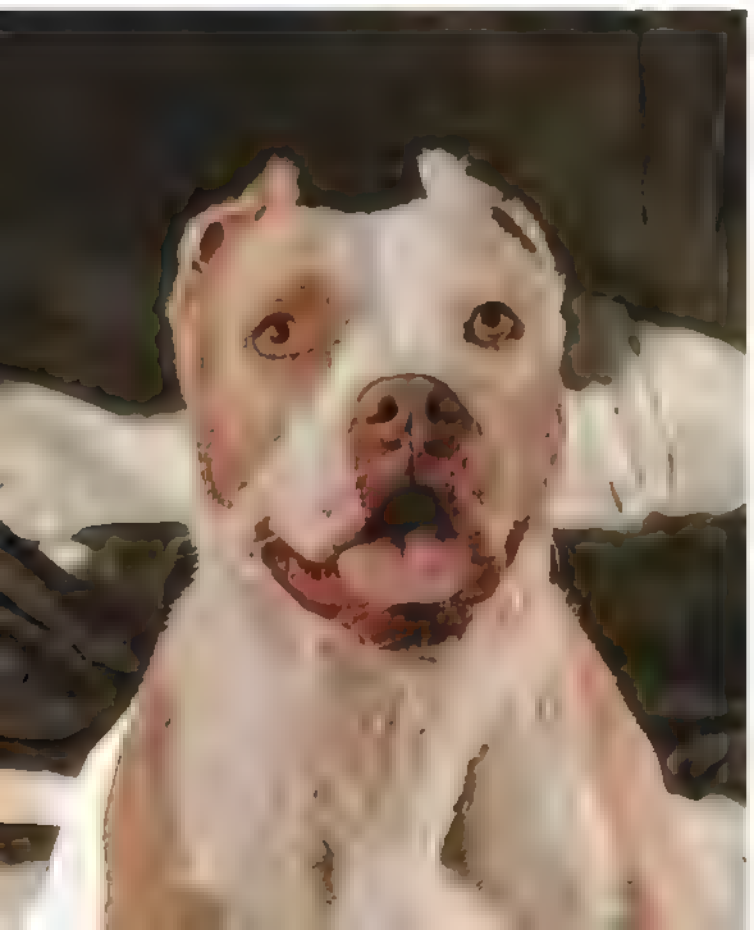
Q7: *Was there ever a point when you considered quitting acting?*

STEWART: Never, because I would be quitting my life. When I was acting as a child, I wasn't "Patrick Stewart." I was living somebody else's life, one that was better than mine. I have always felt safe onstage. As the years go by, what I love about this job is that I get braver about showing myself, letting it be personal and not just a "performance."

Q8: *Sir Ian McKellen is one of your closest*







I don't **know** what happened. **I swear** to you, I was 40 about six **months ago.**

friends and even officiated at your 2013 wedding. What have you learned from him?

STEWART: Gay men have played a part in my life as colleagues and friends, but none so significantly as Ian. I love him and I'm in love with him. So is my wife, and it's mutual. I listen to him, I watch what he does—and I don't mean just acting. How he lives his life is so admirable, selfless and compassionate. We also have a hell of a lot of fun

Q9: *Around whom have you felt the most starstruck in your life?*

STEWART: We were at a Golden Globes party, and a woman with a strong accent came over and asked if I would take a photograph with her. You often have to say no; otherwise you'll be taking selfies all night. Then someone said, "Have you met Nadia before?" I said no. And he said, "This is [Olympic gymnast] Nadia Comaneci." I swear to you my knees almost gave way. I love athletics and sports, and there was Nadia, standing in front of me. It was thrilling.

Q10: *You've become an advocate for cannabis reform. What was your first experience with it, and when did this cause become so important to you?*

STEWART: Drugs played almost no part in my early years. I was around 40 years old before I had any experience with cannabis. What really did it was this [*rubs his hands*]. I have arthritis, so twice a day I use a cannabinoid-based cream, and wow, what a transformation! Another aspect: There was a limo driver my wife and I knew well in New York. We adored him. Then he got cancer and was dying. He stopped eating, watching TV, reading newspapers and talking on the phone. My wife got him some marijuana, and his family told us later that he lived longer than anticipated because he was leading a fuller life. He was eating and telling jokes. This profoundly affected me. Cannabis has medical properties that we've never fully explored. So yes, I'm a modest campaigner for the legalization of medical marijuana.

Q11: *You're also an outspoken supporter of women. Why have so few high-profile men shown similar support in the wake of the #MeToo movement?*

STEWART: Because I don't think they believe it. It's very hard for a lot of men, certainly those of a particular age or degree of success. The way male superiority has become part of our lives is very subtle and complicated. But it exists, and it's now changing — some think not quickly enough. I'm excited by what's happening around me and the impact it has on women's careers and self-respect.

THE DOGS IN THIS STORY APPEAR VIA WAGS & WALKS, A RESCUE ORGANIZATION THAT HAS SAVED THE LIVES OF MORE THAN 5,000 LUCKY CANINES. FIND OUT MORE AT WAGSANDWALKS.ORG

Q12: *When you were coming up in the theater and early on working in film and television, did you witness people being mistreated and think you should help, or was it something you accepted as part of the creative process?*

STEWART: I don't think I could claim to have thought like that. I do know that when I went to drama school, I already knew what a casting couch was—at 17! There is predatory behavior everywhere. I had firsthand experience with that because of my mother's domestic abuse. That's why I became involved with Refuge in the U.K. It's a wonderful organization that helps combat domestic violence.

Q13: *You've talked about wanting to become a United States citizen. How do you feel seeing both your native U.K. and the U.S. now in such tumult, culturally and politically?*

STEWART: It's been creeping up on me of late that I feel guilty I'm not in England more. My whole life I've been involved in left-wing politics. I'm still a member of the Labour Party but have profound reservations about it now. I'm scared. There's a movement toward nationalism in both countries, and one reason is economic and educational division. Boris Johnson and Donald Trump both appeal to people who have experienced deprivation. The gap between the rich and the poor, which is growing at a terrifying rate, and global warming are the things that alarm me most.

Q14: *Changing gears, you and your wife, Sunny, live in Park Slope, Brooklyn. What were some of your first impressions of your new home?*

STEWART: The people who live there are extraordinary. When I first stayed with Sunny at her place, we came out of her building on a summer Sunday morning and saw two guys sitting on a stoop, smoking. I saw one look up, and I didn't want an encounter. As I got abreast of them one of them said, [*in a New York accent*] "Hey, Mr. Stewart! Welcome to the neighborhood. Enjoy." That was it. No "Could I have a selfie?" I get emotional when I think about it, because I've never felt so welcomed, anywhere, in that way.

Q15: *There's a 38-year age difference between you and Sunny. How does this figure, if at all, into your day-to-day lives?*

STEWART: I'm learning so much from her. She remembers everything she reads, which has become formidable ever since she first visited me in London and encountered, in her words, "old shit." She's becoming an expert in late medieval–early Renaissance art and architecture. I walk into a church with her and know what's there because she's done the research. But do I think about our age difference? I'm afraid not very

much. I don't feel self-conscious about it. But it has happened in public when people say, "You and your daughter…." And I say, "Thank you very much." [*laughs*]

Q16: *How did her family feel about your relationship?*

STEWART: I don't think they were too sure at first. But in my wedding speech I said, "I want to clear up a rumor circulating that I married Sunny in order to be near her parents. It's totally true." [*laughs*] We get on so well and laugh so much. They have a cabin in Alpine Meadows, California. I learned to ski at the age of 64. I told her father, "I can't do this. Leave me with a fire, a book and a pot of coffee." He said, "We've booked a trainer to do four hours a day with you." At the end of day four, I nervously took the lift to the top of the mountain and skied down alone. It was thrilling. I've watched hours and hours of winter sports and suddenly I hear that noise [makes whooshing sound], and it was me making it!

Q17: *What first drew you to the cause of animal rescue, and how has it changed you?*

STEWART: It was the trust and the openness of the first dog we fostered, a pit bull named Ginger. I was upset about something I was reading in the newspaper — a daily occurrence — and she came and stood in front of me. With her eyes, she asked, "Are you okay?" A week later, I was sick and throwing up in our bathroom in Los Angeles. And she brought Sunny to me. How do you explain that? Pit bulls are our obsession, but we can't keep pit bulls because they're banned in England. I'm part of a campaign working to get that changed, because it's ludicrous. It's nothing to do with dogs; it's about the owners.

Q18: *You turn 80 in July. How do you plan to mark this milestone?*

STEWART: Sunny has been planning for months now. It will be celebrated in Los Angeles and maybe London too. I don't know what happened, because, I swear to you, I was 40 about six months ago. I remember it vividly. I was filming Excalibur with John Boorman, the director. I didn't get in front of the camera after sitting in full armor all day. I begged him, "It's my 40th birthday. Let me at least be a background person!" He wouldn't. So I feel blessed to be reasonably healthy, to be working, to be so busy, to have an incredible wife with a family that has kind of become my family. I do occasionally get a little bit scared. It just doesn't make any sense to me how I got here.

Q19: *When you did a playboy 20Q back in 1992, you said your five desert-island discs were three classical albums, a cast recording of Sweeney Todd and your friend Brent Spiner's Ol' Yellow Eyes Is Back. Have your tastes since changed?*

STEWART: For the past 25 or 30 years, popular music wasn't in my life. Then I met Sunny, who plays it all the time. I've learned to love country music. I struggle with hip-hop. I'll never forget the first time I heard Sunny sing: I didn't know she was a singer, and then she said, "I have a gig." I didn't know what a gig was! She told me it was in the East Village and happening between 11 o'clock and midnight. *What?* I remember worrying, as the evening wore on, What if this is an open-mike night? Then she went onstage — after midnight. And that was it. Amazing. Wonderful.

Q20: *Also in your last 20Q you vowed never to appear as Jean-Luc Picard in public or utter Next Generation catchphrases. Are you still as strict about such things?*

STEWART: No, I've relaxed significantly about that. It would be weird — I mean really fucked-up — if I was still, "No, no, no, no, I won't say 'Engage!' " ■

Sarah Allen

Model @SARAHALLENAUS

Photography by STEVEN BAGLEY | @BAGLEYPHOTO_

PR LSA PUBLICATIONS | @LSAPUBLICATIONS @LEO.ALDERMAN

Agency @LSAMODELS

Tell us something surprising about you?
I was a total nerd for most of my teenage years, in my room playing games, remember how popular chatrooms were? Not to mention all the music and file sharing programs.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Of course! I was first surrounded by all things playboy when I was invited to one of their amazing parties back in 2010 and met the beautiful, now Crystal Hefner. I love the creative aspect the magazine has taken over the past few years but also the many articles and impressive celebrity interviews Playboy magazine is known for.

What inspires you?
Women achieving their goals and coming together more then ever to help others reach their full potential in which ever style of business, investments or finances that allow them to live an authentic and happy life.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?
Originally, I was an pro athlete in the bodybuilding industry (IFBB). Looking after my health and aesthetics was always expected as well as photoshoots for fitness magazines and various health companies, athletic apparel and fitness products. I enjoyed being on stage but when it came to photos shoots it was

always better to not be so extreme as we would be on stage. I now enjoy a more balanced approach, which fits in well all year round.

What are some of your hobbies?
Keeping active and self-care is a must and will always have you feeling great so getting to the gym and then taking time in the steam room and spa is perfection! I still play games online and on Xbox when alone and have time or when there was time in quarantine.

Name three things on your bucket list?
To own a home in multiple places so I would never be stuck in one place.

Travel through Europe

Own a successful business in something that I am passionate about.

Turn-ons
A good sense of humour with a positive attitude. Smelling good is always a turn on so a good cologne is always nice.

Turn-offs
Arrogance and bad manners.

Describe to us your perfect date.
Being relaxed in comfortable surrounds with some Thai food and a good movie. When you are comfortable and in private its much easier to get to know someone.

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
To learn to accept and love the differences in myself and to realise there is not one perfect body type, eye colour, hair colour etc. everyone has something special and unique to contribute.

ARTWORK BY **ALPHACHANNELING**

PLAYBOY
ADVISOR

Ian Kerner brings his expertise as a Ph.D., LMFT, psychotherapist and author of the best-selling *She Comes First* to tackle a range of sexual dilemmas, from STI fears to sexting etiquette. First up: advice on an underreported problem plaguing the sex lives of almost one in three men

Q: *I'm a 33-year-old straight man, and my problem goes all the way back to when I lost my virginity at 14. I'm sure I wasn't the only high school freshman who climaxed the second a girl touched his dick, but premature ejaculation has hounded me ever since. I've had three long-term girlfriends, and with each of them I've gradually been able to last longer than 30 seconds — but even then my entire sexual ride consists of worrying the big O is coming too fast. After my last relationship ended, I got on the apps for a while but promptly gave up; the embarrassment was too much. It didn't seem to matter whether I'd been drinking or not, whether it was morning, day or night or whether I was mildly or extremely attracted to the woman. At this point I'm ready to ditch sex altogether and stick to masturbating; at least then no one else will know how quick it's over. What's wrong with me? — M.R.,*

A: Above all, know that you're not alone. Premature ejaculation, or PE, affects at least 30 percent of men. In my clinical experience, guys with PE are no different from guys who don't have it in terms of masturbation style, porn use, family background, sexual history or mental health, meaning PE is something you were likely born with. But that doesn't take away from the embarrassment you feel. Here are a few suggestions (including one you can try as soon as you finish this article) that will help you have longer and less-fraught sexual experiences.

The first is a masturbation exercise. Edging, also known as the male multipleorgasm technique, can bridge the gap between masturbation and intercourse. The idea is to identify your point of ejaculatory inevitability — that first contraction of an orgasm — and interrupt it before you go over the edge. When you feel an orgasm coming on, stop! This releases blood from the penis, which in turn cycles the process back a bit, giving you a longer pre-orgasm interval. Try doing this with the help of some new, extra-hot porn. By approximating the intensity of a one-onone sexual encounter, you're more likely to be ready for your next partner.

When you're with that next partner, shift the emphasis away from your penis. Even without PE, there's a big orgasm gap between men and women due to factors such as their arousal times, and there's no way a man with untreated PE can get a woman all the way there. Become an expert at oral sex and manual stimulation. Incorporate sex toys. Use your words. Create fantasies. Do whatever you can either to make your partner orgasm first or to get her right to the edge so you can climax together. (Another tip: Numbing sprays like Promescent can delay orgasm by desensitizing the penis. They're not a total solution but worth a shot.)

The next line of intervention is an SSRI, a common class of anti-anxiety medication with the side effect of delayed ejaculation. It might make sense to talk to your doctor about a low dose, particularly if your anxiety and depression around PE are intense. It's not a panacea, but it can be part of the solution — and there should be no stigma attached to SSRI use.

Dealing with PE is complicated, and managing it takes real effort. The good news is that with a little work you'll likely see a big payoff. So don't give up till you've experimented with multiple approaches. And when you're back in the game, remember that lasting longer doesn't mean your partner will inevitably go straight to pleasure town. Instead of thinking about how long you last, ask yourself, How do I become an arousal-generating person?

Q: *I'm an 18-year-old straight woman who has been seeing the same guy for months — but I've never finished when we have sex. When we use toys I become self-conscious and can't climax even though I use the same things when I'm by myself. At this point I feel pressure to achieve orgasm just because it's been so long. How can I overcome my stage fright? — J.A.,*

A: Orgasms between partners can be inconsistent or even nonexistent in ways that aren't true of self-stimulation. What do you think it is about sex with your boyfriend that makes it so difficult? Could it be a lack of clitoral stimulation? Not enough foreplay? Something about the environment that makes it difficult to relax? Certainly worrying about your orgasm doesn't help, as any form of anxiety during sex is a major arousal inhibitor.

If you're not already talking about this with your boyfriend, you should be. He should know that orgasm doesn't have to be the destination during sex; there are lots of other parts of the journey, and you should be getting the most out of them. I would also ask you to think about the parts of sex you really enjoy. Is it the kissing, the touching, maybe giving him pleasure? For the time being, see if you can create a sex menu that doesn't include orgasm but allows you to enjoy other dishes that may be just as delicious.

I would also encourage you to add some psychological stimulation. By this I mean fantasizing together, watching couples

Instead of thinking about how long you last, ask yourself, How do I become an arousal-generating person?

porn, listening to an erotic podcast. The brain is our most powerful sex organ, and it has the ability to turn us on and off. Right now the anxiety is turning you off, so I want you to fill your head with stimulation that turns you on.

Q: *I'm an 18-year-old male who's never had sex because I'm afraid of getting an STI. How can I get over my fear? W.R.,*

A: Fear is the key word here. It's impossible to have totally safe sex, but you can consis ently have safer sex and a little bit of that fear of yours, balanced with your passion and enthusiasm, can make you a great lover.

With an appropriate amount of fear, you'll be motivated to always use a condom when having intercourse. A little fear can also inspire you to avoid making sexual decisions while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which of course can lead to reckless choices. And your fear will, I hope, inspire you to read up on STIs. I recommend Columbia University's Go Ask Alice website and that of the American Sexual Health Association.

If you've ever had oral sex you should get tested just to know you have a clean slate. If you haven't gotten an HPV vaccine yet, you can do both at the same time. Some STIs are symptomless; when you've been tested yourself it's easier to ask a potential partner if they've been tested. If you're serious about someone and think you may want to see them again, you can start with less-risky behaviors, such as kissing and manual stimulation of the genitals, and wait until your partner has been tested to move to riskier behaviors such as oral sex and intercourse. There's nothing wrong with taking the slow route: It allows more time for passion to percolate. Believe it or not, safe sex can be hot sex.

Q: *My boyfriend has a lower libido than I do. I want him to pursue me I rarely enjoy being the aggressor—but he's happy to have sex once a week or less. How do we reconcile our differences? G.P.,*

A: Low desire is common in both women and men, but sometimes men have to live with the pressure of feeling they should be walking hard-ons. It's also possible your boyfriend experiences anxiety around the discrepancy in your libidos.

All of which is totally natural. Maybe you're able to have what's known as "spontaneous desire," in that you can experience a sexual cue and get turned on quickly, and maybe your boyfriend has "responsive desire," meaning he has to build on sexual cues to experience desire. Desire isn't the first thing he experiences; it occurs once he's somewhat aroused. If that's the case, you may have to change how you think about sex. Your spontaneous desire may have to be the kindling to get him fired up, and his sense of passion or aggression or whatever it is that you crave may have to come a bit later.

See if you can create erotic sparks outside the bedroom and decouple those sparks from any pressure or invitation to have sex. If you usually have sex on the weekend, make a rule that Monday through Friday is an erotic-spark zone where you can engage in small bursts of sexual and erotic connection without feeling they have to lead to sex. Whatever you do, remember that desire, like the stock market, goes up and down and that countless variables can affect libido: stress, mood, lifestyle, health, medications, body image—you name it. Go easy on yourself and your boyfriend as you seek that sweet spot.

Q: *I recently got out of a toxic relationship that was on and off for about three years. For the first time in what feels like forever I'm happy and at peace. That said, I'm finding it hard to put myself out there again. This is made extremely difficult by how horny I am! Considering sex is pretty much all I think about now, do you have any tips on how a straight woman in her early 20s can get back to dating and banging? H.G.,*

A: Congratulations on getting out of an unhealthy relationship. Now you can focus on living a healthy life which, yes, includes sex. Of course a difficult relationship will chip away at your self-esteem, and getting back into the swing of sex and relationships can be nerve-racking. So give yourself some time to get the lay of the land.

I hear that you're horny, but what kind of sex are you looking to have? Some fun, no-strings-attached sex, something more relational or something in between, like a friend with benefits? I think it's important to get in touch with your sexual self before rushing into the actual deed. Start noticing who and what turns you on, what makes you feel sexy and alive.

From there, let the world know you're seeking and that you spent too much time with your gaze focused on the relationship. Connect with people who make you feel good about yourself, and know that you're in charge. You can go out on a date, you can flirt, you can fool around and you can say no at any point. The sexual brain has two systems that operate at once: a sexual excitation system and a sexual inhibition system. It's called the dualcontrol system, and my colleague Emily Nagoski, author of the terrific book Come As You Are, compares it to a car: Your sexual accelerator needs to rev up, but you also have a brake you can step on at any time. So get out there and take a joyride.

And because you're so horny, I hope you're masturbating. The past three years have been a golden age in vibrator design, so start giving yourself the pleasure you crave and deserve.

Q: *I'm a bi woman in her early 20s. My 35-year-old partner of six years told me in an argument that we don't have sex anymore because he's no longer attracted to me since I gained weight. He has apologized several times and tells me how beautiful I am daily, but I have a hard time believing him. We've started having sex again, but it's awkward. I don't want him*

to see my body, and he's afraid he'll somehow hurt my (admittedly sensitive) feelings again This makes our sex passive and cautious. How do we work through it? — E.W.,

A: People say shitty things to each other when they argue and tend to focus on faults. It's great that he apologized, but I understand you still feel hurt by his comments: Sexual self-esteem can be hard to hold on to. The reality is that we all age, our bodies change, our weight goes up and down, and somehow we have to keep navigating a world that celebrates youth, thinness and unrealistic ideals of perfection.

I know he's repeatedly told you he's sorry and thinks you're beautiful, but have you been able to have a conversation that goes beyond apologies and reassurances? Have you been able to say that you want to believe him and move on but that part of you feels hurt and rejected, or part of you is scared he might not be attracted to you anymore? Maybe you need more opportunities to come to him with your vulnerability — and he needs more opportunities to be empathetic and soothing.

Also, try having a few good experiences of real-world sex together and put this behind you. You've been together for six years, so try adding new elements that will bring out some excitement and passion in both of you and get you to that aroused place where you can't keep your hands off each other.

Bottom line: You had an argument, and you need to repair. And when you have an argument that touches on sex, sometimes the repair is in the sex itself.

Q: *I've been with my boyfriend for a year now, and for about half that time we've been in a long-distance relationship. I'm very forward and sexual, but he saves his affection for when we're in the bedroom or, in our case, when we're in the same town. I think sexting is an important part of any relationship, long distance or not, but he won't get onboard. It's truly frustrating. My argument is that since he's never done anything like that, he shouldn't reject it just because he feels u comfortable. How do I make him feel more at ease in the sexting realm? T.C.,*

A: How cool that you're so open to keeping things sexy and alive when you're apart. I think you're totally on the right track, and there's so much you can do from sexting to Skype sex to remote-controlled sex toys to stimulate each other long distance. But those options may take you to deeper waters; in that case, he has to start by dipping his toes in the shallow end

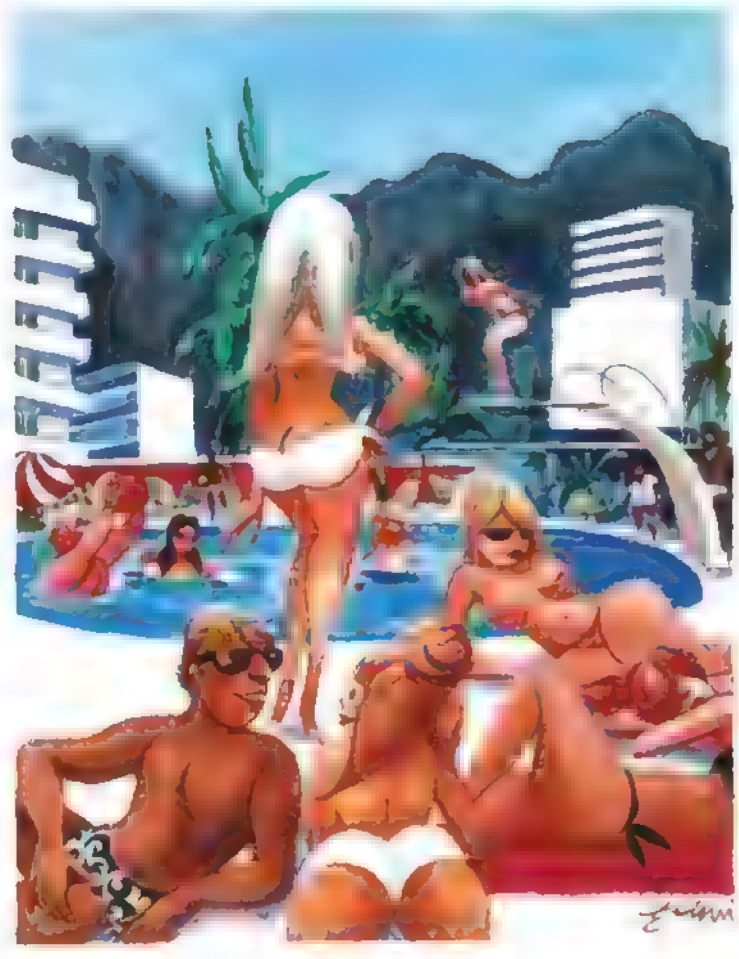
I like that you're able to "mentalize" what he might be experiencing: mainly lack of comfort and experience. Have you tried having a conversation with him in which you appeal to these vulnerabilities — something like "Hey, I know sexting may be out of your comfort zone, and I'm sorry if I'm pressuring you. It's just that I'm really into you and it's hard to be apart. And when you shut me down, it makes me feel rejected." In that statement, you're trying to do a few things: You're giving yourself a way to open up the conversation and acknowledge his vulnerabilities while expressing yours. He may get defensive at first, but don't let him escalate. Just keep coming back to the vulnerability.

Ideally, getting off the main floor of life, as I like to say, and going down to the basement, where all those vulnerable emotions are safely stored, will set the stage for experimentation and sexual connection. Finally, whether you envision sexting as words, photos or both, you can start the process by sending him simple questions to which he can respond yes or no, such as "I'm having a sexy daydream about doing [fill in the blank] when I get my hands mouth on you. Is that something you'd like?" ■

classic *cartoons*

"It turns out nobody has anything to say."

"Bah—I just don't know what the youngsters are coming to these days."



"I feel that our fundamental democratic institutions and faith are on trial in the world today. That's why I'm here resting up for the supreme test."

a fresh bite of
PEACHES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN PFLUGER

The multimedia artist and pop provocateur continues to fight for erotic liberation—this time with the help of a dexterous sex toy

BY **MARY KATHARINE TRAMONTANA**

A new era for Peaches began with an online review of a men's pale-pink silicone double masturbator she happened upon in January 2019. The multimedia artist, best known for her sexdrenched music, found herself shocked by two facets of the clip.

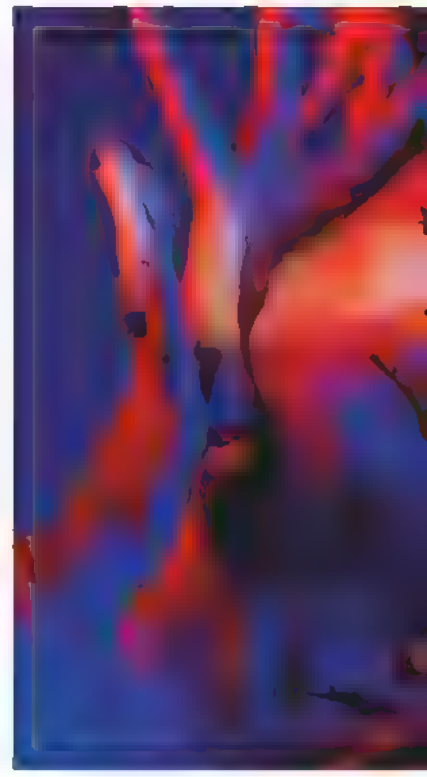
"The first was the look of the object," she says. "It was so disembodied, like 'Danger!' Here's what a woman could be reduced to: a mouth with some red lipstick and a vagina."

Then there was the reviewer himself. "It became clear he'd never had sex with a woman but was projecting that women can't give him what he can get with this toy," she says. "He was talking about having that 'Shut up and suck my cock, bitch' fantasy. I felt sorry for him."

Over a flat white at Godshot cafe in Berlin last fall, Peaches recalls pondering the device's features. One end mimics a woman's mouth and the other a vulva, so the toy could theoretically pleasure itself if it had sovereignty over its body. The idea grew: If, in an alternate realm, double masturbators could speak and move, they could "get together, rename themselves and rewrite their own narrative."

That idea became *Whose Jizz Is This?*, a 10,000-square-foot multisensory feat—"a deconstructed musical in 14 scenes," in her words—that debuted last August at Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany. (There are plans to move the work to North America in the next year.) Jizz tells the story of that imagined universe in which the "Fleshies" come alive and win sexual emancipation. Animatronics, sculptures and film scenes are ignited in intervals by a combination of lights, movement and sound. The project took eight months to execute, with collaborators including experimental musician Black Cracker, technological art hub House of North and (aptly named) fetish design house RubAddiction.

Far away from her brilliantly intense stage persona, Peaches takes a sip of her drink and articulates one of the project's central questions: "Does jizz come only from a male source?"



In one piece, "Cold Turkey," the Fleshies are seen learning about themselves, turning themselves inside out, vibrating on their own without a human's touch. In "Saturnalia Returns," the Fleshies and other sex toys are depicted bonding on a psychedelic journey. Here, the human viewer lies on the floor, taking on a passive role while the Fleshies dominate, mirroring a society with a rigidly enforced active-passive sexual binary.

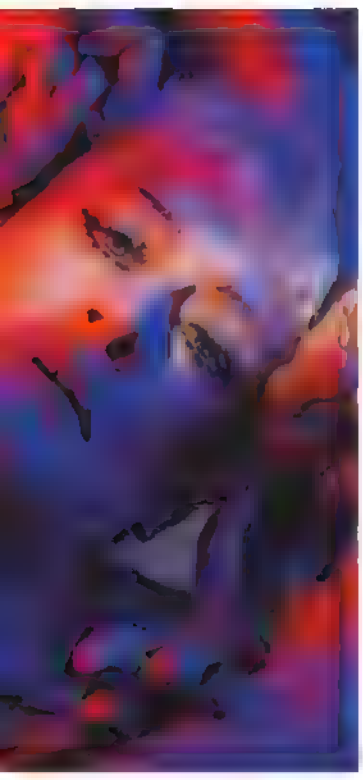
The lure of masturbators is that they take on the submissive role expected of women without argument; they're always ready and willing to be penetrated, and when they are, their experience doesn't need to be considered. But in *Whose Jizz Is This?* a group of Fleshies unite on a large screen to speak out against their erotic subjugation and share their stories and their dreams:

"I will seek the pleasure of myself. I am deserving of pleasure. I deserve to enjoy sexual experience. I deserve to share my intimacy with whomever I please. I can decide when and how I want to give pleasure. I can decide when and how I want to get pleasure."

A useful mantra for any human who's fed up with being jizzed into without respect or reciprocity.

• • •

Peaches, born Merrill Nisker, proved her rebellious spirit from a young age.



We need healthy masculinity represented in a way that intersectional feminism and queer culture are going to accept, help and nurture."

As a child in Toronto she refused to bend to authority and disregarded any lesson at her private Jewish school that didn't foster creativity. Theater became a valuable outlet, and after college at York University, she launched a children's drama program at a local YMCA. She was so inspired by the students' ability to abandon inhibitions that she channeled their wild energy into her nighttime performances across Toronto's underground music scene.

At 30, she left Canada for a new turn in Berlin and created the alter ego we've come to know today, inspired by her complex relationship with pop culture and conversations around sex. In 2000 her persona crystallized with her first album, The Teaches of Peaches.

Each of the album's 11 fearless and catchy tracks is a study of gendered sexual politics. "Fuck the Pain Away" employs lo-fi rap beats and a big bass line to deliver the opening: "Suckin' on my titties like you wanted me / Callin' me all the time...." The song gained in popularity despite being too raunchy to chart, finding its way into clubs everywhere and Sofia Coppola's Lost in Translation.

"I'm not interested in clean," says Peaches, who has since toured with John Waters and collaborated with Iggy Pop, both icons of depravity.

Twenty years and five studio albums later, the 53-year-old has maintained a linear artistic assault on systemic misogyny. Her latest work is a rallying cry for anyone striving to abandon objectification and be treated as equal to men.

• • •

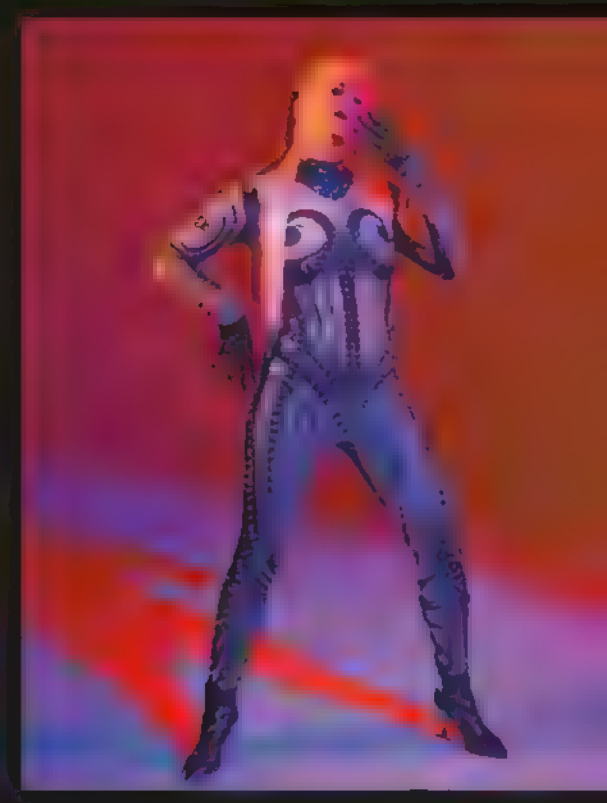
A pre-liberated Fleshie, upon close inspection, exemplifies the problematic way we talk about sex. Just as these masturbators were created for men to insert themselves into, we speak of heteronormative human intimacy as the man performing an act that the woman receives: Penises "pound" and "fuck" supposedly passive and vulnerable female orifices. We have countless words for male masturbation, but we struggle to find phrases to mark its female equivalent.

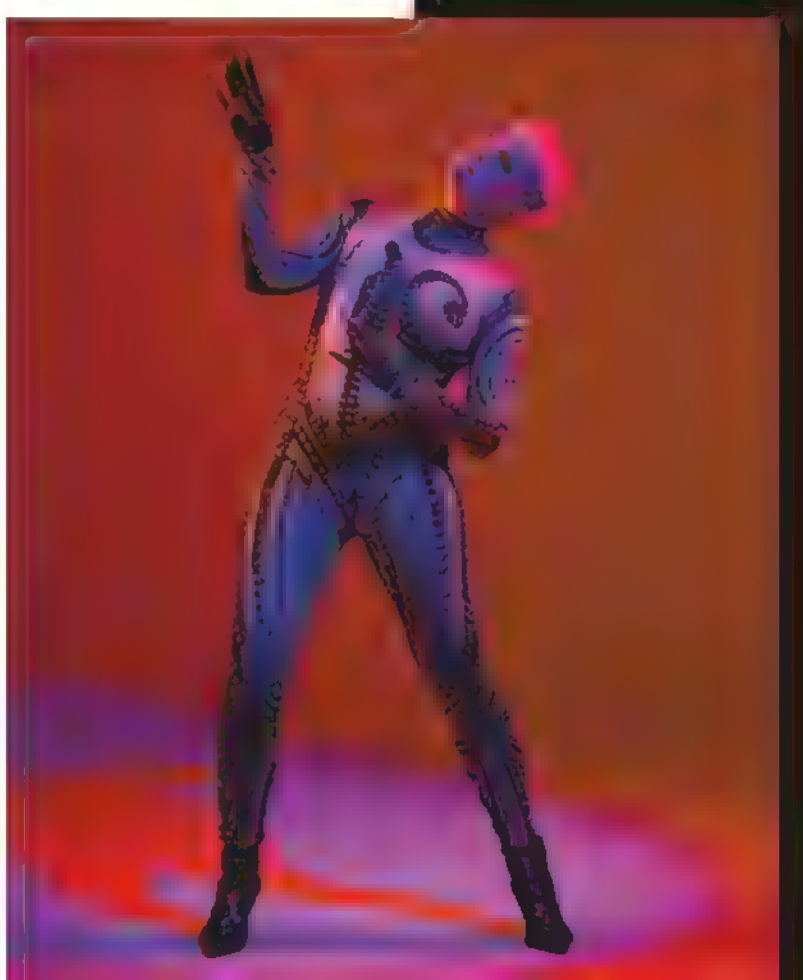
Penises are scarcely featured in Whose Jizz Is This? The absence is conspicuous, a ghostly reminder that modern discussions of sex focus almost entirely on male pleasure. With "Glory Hall," Peaches redirects the focus: This part of the show is an immersive play on the conventional glory hole (an aperture in a wall, just big enough for a penis, so another individual can pleasure the male extremity without face-to-face contact), but the Glory Hall is large enough for individuals to walk through and is lined with 144 Fleshies.

Learned sexual behaviors perpetuate the orgasm gap, or the decades- persistent finding that men have dramatically more orgasms than women in straight sexual encounters. A 2017 study from the International Academy of Sex Research's Archives of Sexual Behavior reports that 95 percent of heterosexual men almost always reach orgasm during sex, compared with 65 percent of heterosexual women. Additionally, according to sociologist and Occidental College professor Lisa Wade, lesbians and bisexual women orgasm about 83 percent of the time, "or about the same frequency that men who sleep with women enjoy." She also suggests that women orgasm easily and reliably when masturbating.

"There's nothing natural about the orgasm gap, especially given the fact that most women are multi-orgasmic and most men aren't," Wade says. "People are just not choosing activities that produce female orgasm, or not choosing to do them long enough."

This discrepancy in orgasms can be partially explained by





phallic imperatives — gendered sexual scripts that prioritize men's experience and pleasure. A straight man may believe the female orgasm is incidental because vaginal sex is the only "real sex," even though clitoral contact (cunnilingus or rubbing) may be necessary for a woman to orgasm. Of course, stigmatizing female sexuality, enforcing negative body image and socializing girls to please others also contribute to the problem. Pleasure equality, Wade concludes, will never happen without gender equality.

The only path to erotic liberation is to abandon the notion that somebody gets fucked and somebody else does the fucking — consensual kink excluded. Instead, partners must do what the Fleshies do: When one is feeling tortured and in pain (like a featured Fleshie that vomits and bleeds), stand up and say, "I can't take this anymore." Partners must value egalitarian sexual encounters that are about discovery and pleasure rather than achievement or status. We need an entirely new perspective on sex.

Prioritizing women's orgasms by putting the clitoris front and center in our art and culture is an essential part of that transformation — one given new life by Peaches. She takes up space in the maledominated industries of music, art and theater as "a form of activism that's entertaining and hopefully inspires creativity. I've always said I want the mainstream to come closer to me."

And she's ready to continue pushing boundaries in her fight for our sexual freedom. The stakes are high. "There are more new abortion laws and more trans murders than ever," she says. "We know how to say 'toxic masculinity,' but what does healthy masculinity look like? What does trans masculinity look like? That's not my conversation, but it needs to be a real one. We need healthy masculinity represented in a way that intersectional feminism and queer culture are going to accept, help and nurture."

In the meantime, as we usher in a new decade in which we have the chance to liberate our patriarchal sexual landscape, repeat after me, woman-identified and gender-queer readers:

"I will seek the pleasure of myself. I am deserving of pleasure. I can decide when and how I want to give pleasure. I can decide when and how I want to get pleasure." ■

IRYNA IVANOVA

Model **@PLAYMATEIRYNA**

Agent/Publicist **INTRIGUE MANAGEMENT | @INTRIGUEAGENCY**
PR **@LSAPUBLICATIONS**

Are you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Absolutely! I have posed for Playboy a few times now, it's always an honour to shoot for such an iconic magazine.

I'm obsessed with space, maybe I can do a Playboy shoot on Mars one day, lol. My 30GGs would love to jiggle and bounce around in space!!

What do you like to do for fun?
I enjoy going to clubs with my girlfriends and dancing all night. I'm also crazy about fashion and love taking sexy but elegant photos for my fashion Instagram page @hipdoll - I get to play dress-up daily and experiment with different looks, which is a lot of fun. Oh, and wearing my boobiest tops and having guys stop and stare at me is also a blast.

You have over 6 million followers on your IG page @PlaymateIryna - how did you grow such a large following?
I first posed for Playboy several years ago and, after that, guys started giving me even more attention than ever before. So I decided to launch my IG page and purposely post the sexiest boobiest photos and video clips I could get away with on IG. I guess my 30GG assets caught the attention of millions of guys - unless it was my eyes, lol.

Tell us some things about you that people may not know.
I'm the top earner on Celeb.tv, which is where I sell my most-raunchy, boobiest content and rate guy's dick pics! I make over a million dollars per year, own houses around the World and live a life of luxury. I'm also super smart - I have a MBA and am multi-lingual. I worked as a Russian/English translator before becoming famous for bouncing my boobies and bursting out of tops on a daily basis!

You starred in the music video for "I'm The One" by Justin Bieber, Lil Wayne and DJ Khalid - tell us more about that...
Shooting the video was a lot of fun, I had to ride a horse and bounce around on it looking pretty, which is obviously something I am highly-skilled at, haha. I met Justin Bieber during the shoot, he was very nice but quite shy. He behaved like a gentleman and was very respectful to myself and the other ladies on set, which was cute. Lil Wayne was the most outgoing one, he seemed to enjoy filming with a bunch of hot women!

playback • *n.* recorded sound or

playboy • *n.* a wealth
his time enjoying hi

player • *n.* 1 *a person*

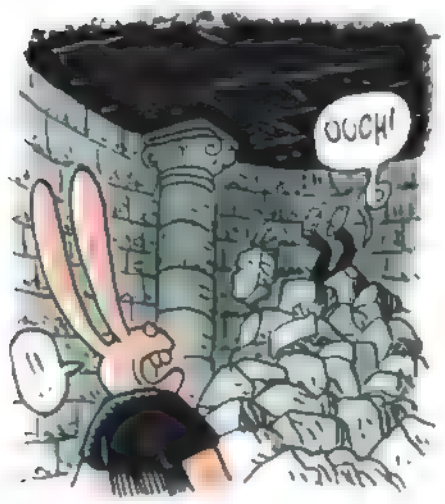
A PASTORAL ADVENTURE OF LAPINOT AND RICHARD

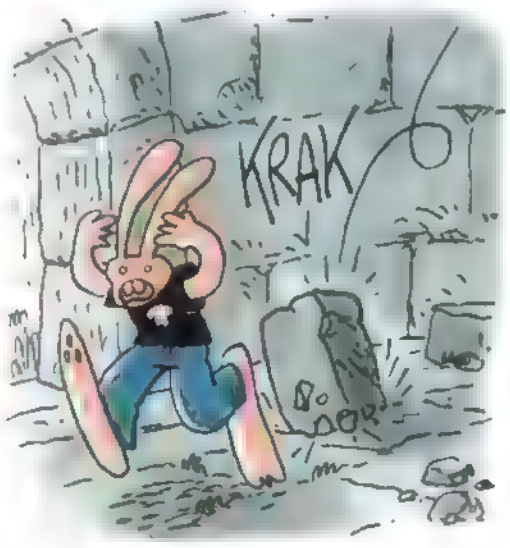
Countrysidekick

BY LEWIS TRONDHEIM

SO, THE LORD OF THE MANOR AND HIS FAMILY WERE ALL KILLED BY A DISGRUNTLED FARMER NAMED JEAN GROLLET
THE FARMER WAS HUGE, OVER TWO METERS TALL. HE WAS NEVER FOUND.
ANOTHER UNSOLVED MYSTERY FROM THE MIDDLE AGES !!!

LET'S SEE... ACCORDING TO THE WEATHER REPORT, IT'S GOING TO POUR FOR AN HOUR.
WELL THEN... LET'S EXPLORE THIS VIRGIN LAND, FREE OF TOURISTS FOR AT LEAST... 24 HOURS...





HA HA HA!
THE FIRST ONE TO FIND SOMETHING GETS TO KEEP IT!
WOO HOO! ALL RIGHT!
HEY, WAIT!
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
NOTHING JUST YET, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING...
I FEEL IT ...
IT JUST LOOKS LIKE A ROTTEN OLD CELLAR.
HOLD ON... WAIT... SOMETHING SPECTACULAR WILL HAPPEN.
YOU KNOW, WE'VE HAD A LOOK AROUND. UNLIKE MOVIES, REAL LIFE ISN'T SCRIPTED BY ANYONE.
MMM...
REAL LIFE STINKS ...
NOW, HOLD ON...
YOU FOUND A MOMENT OF PURE HAPPINESS HERE. THAT'S THE REAL PRIZE.
PFFT...
THERE COULD HAVE BEEN A CRYPT ...
A TREASURE ...
GHOSTS ...
BUT NO!!! NOTHING AT ALL!
BETWEEN YOU AND ME, IT'S POSSIBLE WE ENCOUNTERED OTHERWORLDLY ENTITIES...
OH, REALLY? COOL! TELL ME!
THE SAME MICROSCOPIC FUNGI THAT GAVE HORRIBLE LUNG INFECTIONS TO THOSE WHO DISCOVERED TUTANKHAMEN ... AND WE'LL DIE TWO WEEKS FROM NOW !!!
- End of chapter one -

Meet Naughty
Granny's Dad

Cartoonist Buck Brown took the taboo and made it funny

BY **EILEEN GUO**

Many PLAYBOY readers know Granny, the unabashedly sexual saggy-breasted cartoon character who relentlessly attempts to seduce men, but far fewer are familiar with the artist who invented her for PLAYBOY'S pages: Robert "Buck" Brown. It's past time to correct that.

Like Granny herself, Brown was, in his own telling, an unlikely candidate for the aspirational world of playboy. Born in 1936 outside Morrison, Tennessee, Brown moved to Chicago as a toddler with his mother and brother, part of the Great Migration of African American families out of the South. His mother worked during the day and, lacking childcare options, sent Brown to accompany his older brothers to school. He was three or four years old when, amazed, he watched a teacher draw a truck on the blackboard.

"To me, he was *making* a truck," Brown (pictured at left) recalled in a 2007 HistoryMakers interview with Larry Crowe. "I wanted to do that too."

After finishing high school and supporting himself with odd jobs, Brown joined the Air Force at the age of 19. Serving for nearly four years, he drew satirical sketches of his unit in his free time; the positive reception helped him "learn the power of the pen." When he received his discharge papers, he returned to Illinois and found work as a bus driver for the Chicago Transit Authority in the late 1950s.

It was along his route that he found the initial inspiration for his Granny character. "A bus is, you'll pardon the pun, the perfect vehicle for a cartoonist," Brown said in a 1981 Playboy collection devoted to his work. "I used to keep a sketchbook and cartoon the situations that would happen on the bus. That's how I learned the art of storytelling." Slice-of-life moments included several in which older women boarded his bus asking innuendo-laden questions such as "Do you go down?" or "Do you go all the way?"

Hoping to get a foothold in the cartooning world, in 1961 Brown sent his first batch of sketches to playboy, expecting rejection; he had already been turned down by *The New Yorker* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. "I wanted to be a cartoonist, but I knew deep down inside I couldn't, so I figured, if I was going to get my stuff rejected, why not get rejected by the best?"

Of the eight options Brown mailed, Hugh Hefner — himself an aspiring cartoonist, albeit in the years before playboy — accepted the eighth, a black-and-white drawing of a boy playing trumpet in the corner, his back to the room; his mother explains to his father, "No, he hasn't been naughty, he's just imitating Miles Davis." The reference to the musician's famous habit of facing away from the audience likely appealed to Hefner, a jazz devotee who would soon print the very first *Playboy Interview* — with Davis as the subject. The cartoon ran in a November 1961 issue of *Show Business Illustrated*, a short-lived title from Hefner's HMH Publishing Co., and Brown's relationship with the Rabbit was off and running: Across 45 years, Brown contributed nearly 600 cartoons to playboy. During his seven years as a bus driver, he was also earning an art degree. "Whenever I needed money, I would sell cartoons at playboy," Brown told HistoryMakers. "I cartooned my way through college." In 1965 he quit his CTA job to focus on art full-time.

By the time his naughty granny made her playboy debut, in 1966, women baring their breasts had long since been the magazine's norm. And yet the appearance of the toothless old woman with the voracious sex drive is noteworthy. This was no young beauty photographed in soft light and airbrushed to perfection; Granny's conventional unattractiveness, and sexual energy in spite of it, was the point.

"A young woman's sexuality is difficult enough to handle," wrote anthropologist Judith Posner in her 1975 paper "Dirty Old Women: Buck Brown's Cartoons." "Perhaps a sexy old woman is so horrendous that it is even difficult to joke about. But finally, somebody has, and [Brown's] humor may well be viewed as an attempt to disparage and push away the fear."

Upending norms and detoxifying off-limit topics turned out to be one of Brown's specialties. Key to this was his deft touch. His jokes weren't always obvious, observed comics critic and historian R.C. Harvey. "Brown's cartoons were often like that: You had to think before you reaped your reward in laughter."

The Granny cartoons are Brown's most popular, but perhaps more incisive are his works that comment on politics and race. Michelle Urry, playboy's longtime cartoon editor (and Brown's commissioning editor), described his takes on the civil rights and protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s as "gentle but sophisticated." Take, for example, his October 1967 cartoon that addresses the segregated housing then common across the country. In it, a group of black adults face a line of white ones on a suburban street; rather than protesting the new arrivals to the neighborhood, the white people smile and hold signs of welcome. Expressions of confusion appear on the black neighbors' faces. The caption reads, "It must be a trap!"

In a 1984 interview with Brown that touched on that cartoon,

Urry compliments Brown's ability to address issues of social justice that others were afraid to go near. "You simply pulled the fangs from it and made everybody laugh at it," she said. How did he manage to do black humor so well, she asked. In the same deadpan style that was a signature of his art, Brown responded, "Well, see, I was raised around black people."

Brown was well aware of whom he was selling his work to: Most of the characters he created for playboy were white, and his pieces relating to civil-rights issues were a fraction of his overall output.

"It probably helped me because PLAYBOY couldn't see my face," Brown told Chicago journalist Ronnie Reese in an interview toward the end of his life. "It was a long time before anyone even knew I was black."

The extent to which Brown's race was obscured is illustrated by a June 1970 *Dear Playboy* letter complaining about Brown's "blatantly racist" March 1970 cartoon, in which "Lil' Willie's" soul-food restaurant is "discovered" by white hipsters. "The black man in America is having a difficult enough time realizing his own prestige and identity, without some Whitey picturing him as a poverty-stricken, ignorant subhuman," an outraged reader wrote. PLAYBOY responded in an editor's note: The reader's "heart may be in the right place, but not his facts: Buck Brown is black; his cartoon satirizes racism."

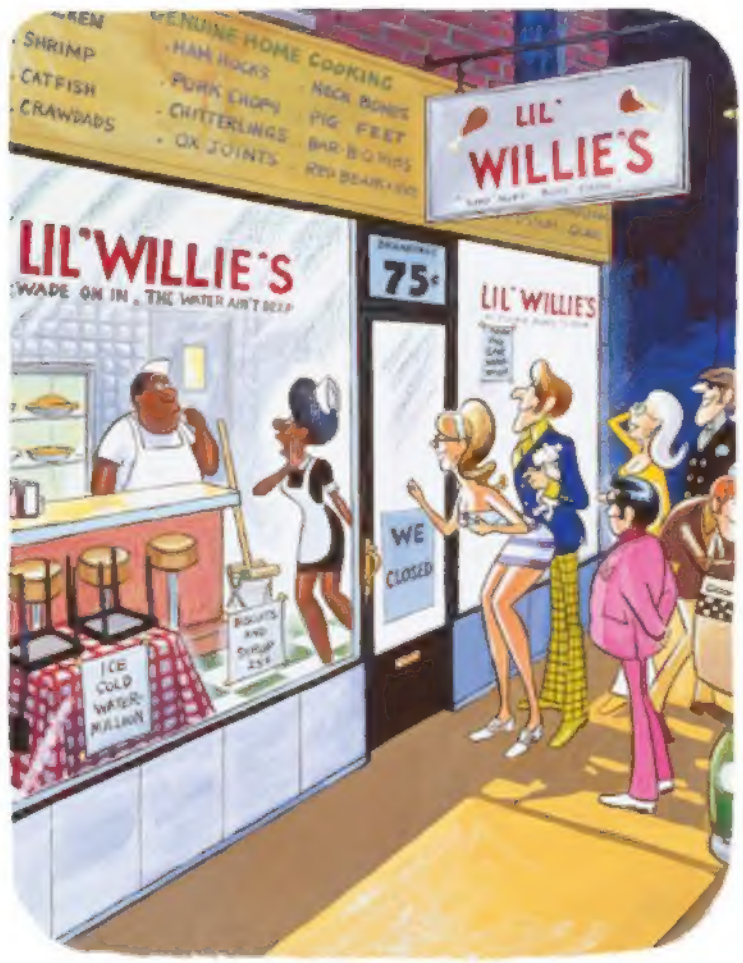
Brown himself was more circumspect. "I kept saying there's no way that a soul brother would see this and not know that a black person did it," he told Urry, pointing to the pains he took to portray the humanity and respectability of the black character — the neighborhood is clean and safe; Willie's restaurant is spotless. In fact, throughout his work, Brown was intentional about how he drew African Americans, if he depicted them at all. "I'll use black people…if I can without them being the butt of it or, you know, if there's a reason for it."

Although it wasn't always apparent to his audience, Brown was a black man in a deeply racist America — and this shaped not only his perspective as an artist but also his take on success. "Coming up at the particular time that I did, you had to be resilient," he explained to Urry. "You had to be able to laugh no matter what, you know? I mean you felt like crying inside but…you always managed to make light of the situation." He felt enclosed by barriers he couldn't break through — "glass ceiling, glass wall, glass floor," as he put it to Crowe. "You're not going to make it as a black Jim Davis or a Charles Schulz."

Brown did, however, thrive where Hefner pivoted: a successful career as a cartoonist, with his work appearing in publications including *The New Yorker, Esquire, Ebony, Jet* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. As a freelance illustrator and cartoonist, Brown never officially retired, though in his later years his cartoons appeared less frequently in PLAYBOY. In the years before his July 2007 passing, Brown shifted his attention to painting. His cartoons and paintings have sold at auction and are held in private collections, including that of singer Johnny Mathis.

As for Granny, she became a PLAYBOY Centerfold in a 1980 humor piece. She continues to be beloved — and to tirelessly chase after sexual satisfaction. ■

"Then why in hell do they call this a ball park?"



"We've been discovered."

JOURNEY DOWN THE **RABBIT** HOLE.

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